

REBUILDING OUR WORLD

*Sermons in the
Harvard College Chapel*



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OF PREACHERS TO THE UNIVERSITY



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To
My Fellow Members
on
The Harvard Board of Preachers

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Foreword



THESE sermons have all been preached in the Harvard College Chapel—the exact title is The Memorial Church in Harvard University. Most of them are post-Pearl Harbor, and therefore have as their constant background a world in which “the clouds have returned after the rain.” This fact gives to them a certain unity which at times may seem to lapse into monotony. I see no escape and, indeed, have sought no escape from the situation in which all preachers find themselves today.

I have printed the sermons, with an occasional slight alteration, precisely as they were written. They were meant to be heard in the first instance and now to be overheard on the printed page. The style of words which are written to be heard allows, if it does not require, more repetition than is the case with words written to be read. But even at the cost of the patent redundancy it has seemed better to keep the original form, rather than to try to “improve the English.”

Harvard gave up compulsory chapel in 1886. At that time the affairs of its chapel were put in charge of a Board of Preachers to the University, consisting of a resident professor, who should act as Chairman, and five members drawn from the major Protestant churches most largely represented in the student body. Professor Francis Greenwood Peabody was the first Chairman of the Board and he left as a permanent record of his ministry two matchless little volumes. *Mornings in the College Chapel* is made up of short addresses which he gave at Daily Prayers. His volume of Vesper sermons, which came later, was called *Sunday Afternoons*

in the College Chapel. The next Chairman of the Board was Professor Edward Caldwell Moore. During his ministry our present Sunday morning service was instituted and our present congregation consolidated. This congregation includes together with students many members of the Faculty, with their families, as regular pew holders. The presence of these Faculty members gives our Sunday morning service sanctions and a stability which are too often wanting in college chapels elsewhere. Our congregation, however, has never been organized as a church although it has many of the qualities of a parish. Much of the substance of our congregation as a parish we owe to Professor Moore's ministry. I became Chairman of the Board in 1929 and since then have divided my duties between the Divinity School and the University Church.

In due time some informed and competent person should make a study of the American college chapel as we meet it in our privately endowed colleges and universities. Most of these chapels are technically nonsectarian; this merely means that in practice they are interdenominational. These chapels are, so far as I know, unique in the history of Christianity. They have no precedents in the past and no parallels in the Old World. Sectarians suspect them, and the institutions which maintain them, of being imperfectly religious. Ardent denominationalists fear that in such an atmosphere their young people may "lose their religion." These scruples and fears seem to me needless. Visiting preachers are free to speak their full mind and witness to their own faith. They seldom duplicate one another; rather, they complement one another. But in both pulpit and pew, with preachers and students alike, there is the awareness of "other sheep not of my fold." What these chapels may lack in sharpened dogma, they gain as centers of tolerance and ventures in catholicity.

We are living at a time when the cause of Christian unity and church union has ceased to be the vague luxury that it

once seemed and has become a spiritual and moral necessity. I venture to suggest that our American college chapels are, unconsciously rather than consciously, prophetic ventures in that direction and that many persons who will in maturity move resolutely in this direction will have had their first experience of church unity in these same chapels, where all sorts and conditions of Christians worship together. There is as yet no way of verifying this guess and no apparatus for tabulating the facts. Yet it is this aspect of our college services which interests me more and more. It may well be that instead of lagging behind the ranks of the denominations our college congregations are at this point in advance of denominationalism, pioneering in an area which is yet to be fully possessed by organized religion.

In any case these run-of-the-mill sermons are offered in the interest of some such catholicity, not as exceptional utterances, but as a transcript of the type of preaching which is going on in the American college chapel. Here and there the reader will find an inevitable reference to academic life, but there is no attempt to treat students as a class by themselves. On the contrary, it is assumed that they are members of the whole religious family, who come to chapel to realize that fact more fully, and not to escape from it.

W. L. SPERRY

Cambridge, Massachusetts

July 6, 1943



REBUILDING OUR WORLD



I. *Rebuilding Our World*



They which builded on the wall . . . every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

—NEH. 4:17



THE world is seeing today as, alas, it has so often seen in the past, a wave of savage anti-Semitism. When that wave is set in motion, it aims among other things to wash out the Old Testament.

This attempt was first made in the second century by a man called Marcion. He failed in his endeavor and was declared a heretic. He has had many successors in his venture, but none of them has ever succeeded. There is much truth in Dean Inge's remark that whatever else may be said of the Jew, he has lived on in history to stand by the grave of every one of his persecutors. We trust this is to be his destiny today.

Meanwhile, we may believe that in its own right the Old Testament will outlive its critics. Leslie Stephen once said that he knew nothing whatsoever about the verbal infallibility of the Bible, but that he did believe in the plenary literary inspiration of the narrative parts of the Old Testament. There are no stories in the world to match those of the Old Testament. They won long ago their rightful immortality in the world of letters and, though very old, are ever

new. They live on and on because they are unerring in their instinct for elemental and essential things and have thus become classical parables of human life. This is their main value to us today. Whatever our changing circumstances we never fail to find in the Old Testament some story that comes alive for us as the record, not of what happened long ago and far away, but of what is happening to us here and now.

So it is with this story of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. There are in the Old Testament three books concerned with the reconstruction years after the Jews had returned from the Babylonian captivity to Palestine. First, the book of Nehemiah tells of the rebuilding of the wall; then, the books of Ezra and Haggai tell of the rebuilding of the temple. The three together are concerned, if you will, with the perennial problem of state and church.

In the Nehemiah story there are two facts which should be noticed. To begin with, it was not a pioneer job. There had been a wall before. That wall had been cast down. The premise for the Book of Nehemiah is a passage in the Second Book of Kings:

And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the Lord. . . . And all the army of the Chaldees that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Such was the scene and the situation with which, fifty years later, Nehemiah was confronted. He did not have the zest of doing a new thing; he had rather the relatively dull job of doing over again what had been done before and spoiled in the meantime.

A second fact to be noticed is this: Nehemiah was not able

to give his undivided attention to his work. The Babylonians, it is true, were gone. But new local critics and enemies appeared, who either did not believe that the wall of the city could be rebuilt, or did not wish it rebuilt. Therefore, Nehemiah and his fellows had to get on with their work with divided attention and without a single mind. In one hand, as the story says, they held a sword, and in the other some stonemason's tool—a chisel or a hammer or a trowel. Building the wall was therefore a matter of doing two things at the same time, fighting off trouble with one hand and laying stones with the other.

Henry Thoreau says somewhere, and very truly, that there are some people who love a story for its own sake, quite apart from the moral. Certainly this old story from Nehemiah is well worth reading for its own sake. It does not need the moral appended since the moral is implicit in the story. But it is a little hard not to allow oneself the chance of pointing out the parallel between the task in those days and that in our day.

It must be true with you, as it is with most of us, that now and then you hear or read some stray remark which seems to you so true that you never forget it thereafter. Thus there was in August, 1914, a line written in the *London Nation*, by its editor, Massingham, which was far nearer the fact than he could ever then have realized. The first World War had just begun, and Massingham said, "The world of hope and ideas lies in ruins. In years to come our enfeebled hands will have to collect its scattered stones and try to put them in place again." That sober appraisal of the event has outlasted most of the rhetoric on which we were then fed.

We Americans are still living in the afterglow of the pioneer period of our history in which there have always been new things to be done. Our hereditary national feeling for novelty lying in the receding West has been strengthened by the almost incredible advances made by science as it is

applied to the furniture of everyday life. As a result we think of ourselves as creators. Our vernacular abounds with references to creative scholarship, the creative arts, and creative social endeavor. The word has become a kind of modern idol. But we forget that for the most part we do not create what is not there; we are simply discovering what is already there. Creation is never an easy act and is on the whole a rare rather than a common act. Most of the world's supposed creators are either copyists of fact or interpreters of fact. There are very few of us who have any right to use this word to give a sober description of our daily work, and even those who use it may use it only occasionally.

The plain fact is that an inordinate amount of the world's time and strength has always had to be spent in works of re-creation rather than original creation. This may seem to us a dull destiny and a secondhand task, but it is nevertheless so. Let us not forget, however, what the architects tell us, that there is hardly a stone in St. Peter's in Rome that had not been cut and used long before in some earlier pagan or Christian building. And if it seems to you that the ever renewed effort to rebuild and remake things is beneath your desert, it is well to remember that, according to traditional Christian thought, God's greatest work has been that of redemption rather than creation. For God, seeking through Christ to recover what had long before been lost, was doing both a more difficult and a more significant thing than he had first done. Whatever interpretation you place upon the narratives, the first chapter of the Gospel of John is a more mature work than the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. The Gospels as a whole are for us more important than the Pentateuch. The story of the Garden of Eden is lovely with "the freshness of the early world," but the story of the Garden of Gethsemane is more profoundly true to life.

We are living at a time when man is destroying the natural wealth of the world, his own savings, his cities, his insti-

tutions, and his traditions with reckless disregard of the consequences. Therefore, the rest of our lives will have to be spent mainly with works of reconstruction, many of them of a purely material kind, others of the more intangible values. It may well seem to us under such conditions that it is our sorry lot to have been born in time too late for "creative effort" and "creative living." But may it not be that we are hereafter to find ourselves far closer to what has been in the main the immemorial life of man on earth and far nearer the meaning and reality of human experience? And if the remaking of our tumble-down world, the putting of its stones in place again, seems to us only dull convict labor in a chain gang, it is well to remember that according to the Christian religion God himself has never abandoned fallen humanity or thought the task of redemption and reconciliation beneath his divine dignity.

It is because man is dear to God, that God has never ceased to be concerned for what Professor Hocking has called "human nature and its remaking." So it is precisely because man's cities and societies are simply his life built into institutions, that when they are cast down, nothing matters so much to him as their recovery. No "creative effort" can mean as much to him as the re-creation of what he has loved and lost. In some ways the most moving passages in the Hebrew prophets are those which look forward to precisely this task.

Thou shalt build the old waste places, thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. . . . For I the Lord will build the ruined places.

A hundred years ago and more Blake cried, "Rouse up, O Young Men of the New Age," and then penned those four stanzas, *Jerusalem*, which are today being sung all

over the English-speaking world to Sir Hubert Parry's stirring setting, sung to a world caught as never before in "dark Satanic mills."

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green,
And was the Holy Lamb of God,
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold,
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant land.

Plainly Blake had the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in mind, the unsleeping sword in hand. What dream or desire can be nearer the heart of any Englishman today than that which looks to the rebuilding of London, around St. Paul's? This time it shall be built better and more lovely than before. What purpose could any statesman have, more worthy of his wisdom, than the re-making of the broken bonds between states and peoples? Such is the world in which we shall live hereafter. And if we feel that such a world denies us creativity and that we are called only to repair and restore, let us remember that in history this is a very high calling. For such, we are told, is the meaning of the coming of Christ into the world of men.

And then a final word about the way in which Nehemiah had to get on with his work with distracted attention and a divided mind, his two hands each doing a different thing. One can imagine no situation less likely to win the approval of a modern industrial engineer.

Yet, once again, the way in which that work was done is probably more nearly like man's life, than the Utopian conditions for labor proposed in the blueprints of some efficiency expert. We all dream of the ideal conditions under which we might work. Then, we say, the work would be a joy and a success. Good health, tools that fit the hand and the mind's habit, material that is malleable and tractable, ample light and air, a sense of being unhurried, a lack of private worries, needless noises silenced, no intermeddling of overseers or critics—we have all dreamed of it, and none of us has ever realized it.

In the preface to one of his later volumes of collected essays, the English historian, Stubbs, apologizes for the volume. He says that its papers were all written under pressure, for special occasions, in time that had to be stolen from regular duties. They were done, as he puts it, "against the grain." He then adds that he has never found what he supposes might be the ideal conditions for writing, but that he wonders whether, if such conditions could be found, the resultant work would be as good as that done under much less promising circumstances. He hazards the guess that most of the world's best work is always done "against the grain" rather than with the grain.

You will remember William James' description of his visit to Chataqua. Nature was gracious, men and women were virtuous and happy; art was prodigal in its abundance; there were no sins or vices or ugliness; there were no problems and pains and sorrows. Here, he said, is that Utopia toward which all prophets from Isaiah to Marx have looked longingly with eager hearts. And then, when

one gets it, one does not like it. It was only when he was on a train running into the city that he found out what was wrong. He saw through the window a workman riding high on a steel beam, dangling from a crane, to be dropped into its place in a rising skyscraper; then he understood. There were no risks in Chatauqua and no danger; and somehow life demands risk and danger.

So it is with our human need for some kind of opposition. There is in the Book of Psalms a person very prominent, who is called "the enemy." The Psalms refer to "the friend" only about ten times but to "the enemy" at least a hundred times. Who is this man, and why is he so much to the front in the Psalmist's mind? Was the Psalmist, as has sometimes been suggested, slightly pathological; had he a persecution complex? Was he a poor man, and his enemy the rich man? Since some of the Psalms were written in captivity, was he an agent of the secret police, an officer in some ancient Gestapo? Was he, as some of the later and more introspective Psalms seem to intimate, the Psalmist's own worst enemy, himself?

Well, whoever he was, he stands for some element or principle of opposition in the world, a world that has to be worked hard at and wrestled with. And apparently he is necessary to the scheme of things, in which we must learn to welcome those rebuffs that "turn earth's smoothness rough." And apparently, also, he need not be permanently and ultimately hostile. "Let thy friend be to thee a kind of beautiful enemy." "Religion is the transition from God the void to God the enemy, and from God the enemy to God the companion." These are the words of wise men.¹

None of us is likely to have during the rest of his working life anything like ideal conditions under which to do his work. There will be distractions and difficulties. Even when we are committed to the most cooperative endeavors

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson and Alfred North Whitehead.

we shall still have to reckon with stubbornly divided minds as to the best means of doing good. There will be the cold water of criticism and skepticism thrown on our ventures. We shall not have as good material to work with as we once had, even human material. The war, alas, will have taken its toll of the best. All these things are only too true.

But something of our lot in life in these latest days, and thus of our opportunity, is anticipated and symbolized in that old heroic parable from the Book of Nehemiah. "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon. . . . So we builded the wall, and all the wall was joined together. For the people had a mind to work."

II. *The Open Sea of Life*



Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters.

—EZEK. 27:26



ONE of the modern translations is more colloquial: "You have been rowed out onto the high seas." Any one who knows anything about small boats and the seashore will understand this metaphor. A rowboat ought to keep in quiet waters; it has no business out in the open ocean. I can still hear my father's voice saying to me when I was a boy, "All right. You can go. But stay inside the harbor; don't go outside." Sometimes, however, one did go outside, and felt the ground swell and saw the far-off horizon line, where, as the saying goes along this eastern coast, "the next parish is Connemara."

A good figure of speech will often say for us what we have tried to say and failed. Such a form of words crystallizes around itself all those vague thoughts and feelings which have been in suspense. So it is with this verse from Ezekiel. It is a faithful description of our life and lot today. It is so perfect as it stands that it is almost an act of presumption—what the Catholic calls "a work of supererogation"—to try to explain it or to add to it. Therefore, perhaps the most I can do is to remind you of the verse if you have read it long ago and forgotten it, or call your attention to it if you have never noticed it before. Once it is lodged

in your mind it will stay there, because it tells you so much truth about yourself, your part in society and your place in history. You are no longer drifting idly or paddling in some sheltered cove; you are at sea; you are in the open ocean.

The most nearly perfect comment on the text is, surely, that lovely old prayer of the Breton fisherman on the coast of France, "O God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small." The prayer, as one usually meets it, goes no further. It stops there. Persons who think of prayer as being above all else a means of getting something for themselves will say that those Breton words are not prayer at all. They ask for nothing; they make no petitions for self or intercessions for others. They confess nothing and give no special thanks for anything. How can so neutral a sentence be called prayer? The answer is that we have here the groundwork and premise for all prayers. That premise is simply man standing consciously in the presence of God. What may follow from this fact is a corollary of prayer but not its initial reality. In want of the thought revealed in those words taken by fishermen from their life at sea, prayer is little more than would-be and futile magic.

That line from Brittany reminds us of Sidney Lanier's hymn to the *Marshes of Glynn*, where littleness is set in greatness:

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold, I will build me a nest on the greatness of God;
I will fly in the greatness of God, as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and
the skies:

By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold of the greatness of God:
-Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.

Or, if you prefer the sober prose of a reflective thinker, remember what Pascal said about the greatness and littleness of man:

Let man contemplate the whole realm of nature in her full and exalted majesty. Then, returning to himself let man consider his own being. Let him regard himself as wandering in this remote province of nature; and from the little dungeon in which he finds himself lodged, let him learn to set a true value on the earth, its kingdoms, its cities, himself. As his curiosity changes to wonder, he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to search into them in presumption. In a word, man knows that he is little. He is, then, little because he is so, but he is truly great because he knows it.

So it was with the Breton fisherman. He knew himself to be a weak creature of few years, a little thing on the open ocean, but he was great because he could set his littleness in the vastness of the sea about him. Prayer will never be true to the fact or help us much, unless it is premised by the serene candor of that simple statement, "O God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small."

It is for precisely this reason that those other and older words from Ezekiel have about them, strangely, the true quality of religion. "Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters." To realize that—the length and breadth and depth of the open ocean, and the frailty of one's own craft—is to have come into a religious relationship with nature, with history, with God.

There died not long ago at Coniston in the English Lake District a man named Collingwood, one of the half dozen most acute minds that have come out of Oxford in the last generation. In a recent book he says that it has been one of the tragedies of modern life that there have been far too many able men condemned to do little things. He does

not question the technical skills of our time, but he thinks they have had to be addressed to trivial ends. Whereas, he says, if you look back on the Middle Ages,

the men of that day seem to us half children and half giants. In their innocent superstitions they are children; but in the solid magnitude of their achievements, their systems of law and philosophy, their creation and organization of huge nation-states, their incredible cathedrals, and above all their gradual forging of a civilized world out of the chaos of barbarism, they seem possessed by a tenacity and vastness of purpose which we can only call gigantic. They seem to be tiny people doing colossal things.

Their rowers had brought them into great waters. Their boats were small, but their sea was great.

May it not be that one of the reasons for the felt lack of religiousness in the life of the present time is to be found in precisely the fact of which this writer complains—the number of really able men who have to spend a lifetime doing little things? In such a situation a man dares not ask why he is doing what he does, or what is the use of it. He could not face the verdict of futility which might have to be passed upon the tasks to which he gives his skills. There is abroad in the world a grim suspicion that life is meaningless, and that suspicion arises from an uneasy sense that much which claims our attention is beneath the powers and the deserts of an immortal soul. Religion, and a feeling for the religiousness of one's life, is not bred from such reflections.

Well, whatever may have been true of those rather futile years lying behind us and between the two wars, this indictment of our lot need no longer be true. We are once again living at a time when little men are challenged and expected to do great things. It is true that man's first instinctive thought when faced with such a situation is one of

self-distrust. His immediate instinct is to evade the occasion and shirk the summons. He hopes that he may be able, as Emerson puts it, "to dodge the account and lose himself in the crowd." And it is fair to say that such thoughts and instincts are not always prompted by selfishness or cowardice. Many a man honestly feels that he cannot measure up to the task and meet the hour.

And the Lord said unto Moses, I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people. And Moses said, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring forth the children of Israel? I am not eloquent, I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon and said to him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am least in my father's house.

And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah saying, Behold I have ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said Jeremiah, Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child.

And the voice of the Lord said, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And Isaiah said, Woe is me, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

The thing is constant and classic; but what is more than that, it is also sincere. I am not old enough, or strong enough, or wise enough, or good enough to do what the times ask of me. The sea of troubles is very great and my little boat is small. And yet no one of these men in the Bible record was suffered to let the case rest there. They were bidden to think twice and better of themselves, because God was to be with them. Therefore, today we remember

them, for all their undoubted littleness, as men who did great things. In the end they put out to sea.

Here we are, in a city on the Atlantic seaboard. Great ships with famous names still slip silently into our harbor and sail away on their stern business in the great waters. Some of you, now in college, may find yourselves in another six months aboard a transport on the Atlantic. Even the biggest of the ships, a *Queen Mary* or a *Queen Elizabeth*, is a very little thing in mid-ocean. Perhaps you will then remember the text we have used here in the college chapel this morning, "Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters." And you may well, then, go on to say, with the Breton fisherman, "O God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small." Even if you say nothing more, you will have said your prayers for that day. You will in all sincerity have known the measure of your own littleness as that littleness is now set in a vast event, and in the knowledge of that fact lies the truth and the secret of your greatness.

But some of us will still be here at home about the familiar tasks of every day. Persons so placed often feel that they are missing the truth of their time; they feel left out. Perhaps they merit the final words of this hour.

The routine civilian chores of home and shop and school and college always seem, at a time like this and, by contrast with the life of the soldier, unglamorous. There is the suggestion of being thus denied not so much the glory as the inspiration of far horizons and vast affairs, from which the proverbial "happy warrior" draws his strength. It is as though, when the angel troubles the pool of history, some one else slipped by and got there first.

Farewell, fair day, so foully spent . . .

I linger useless in my tent. . . .

Farewell, we twain shall meet no more.

It is not much the fashion to read sermons nowadays, but if any of you feel that, because of the meagreness and dullness of your work, you are being denied access to the greatness of these times, I suggest that you look up a sermon of James Martineau called "Great Principles and Small Duties." He used as his text for the sermon the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. It was the peculiarity of the greatness of Jesus, he says,

that it—I will not say stooped, but—penetrated without stooping to the humblest wants; not simply stepped casually aside to look down at them, but went directly to them and lived wholly in them.

Thus he goes on to say, we get from the Gospels and from the life of Jesus the plain truth that

a soul occupied with great ideas best performs small duties; that so far from petty principles being best proportioned to petty trials, a heavenly spirit taking up its abode with us can alone sustain well life's daily toils; that the divinest view of life penetrates most clearly into the meanest emergencies.

Then Martineau goes on to illustrate his thesis. His most pertinent example for us in a college is the familiar fact that the greatest scholar in the field is on the whole the most successful man in giving an introductory course. So, of another and later man, Canon Barnett, in East London, it was said that he never failed to give the cup of cold water but always gave it with the whole mass and momentum of the Christian religion behind it. That is why he could go on giving the cup for a long lifetime in the drabness of Whitechapel. He was doing a little thing for a great reason.

Unless our world is to fall apart from carelessness or neglect, there remains this toll of small duties that must be done, day by day. If in these times of vast issues it seems

to you that your tasks are drab and meagre, you will do well to remember Martineau's axiom that "a soul occupied with great ideas best performs small duties." In this way the lesser things of every day may be launched into the "great waters."

We of this generation are little men, but we are little men called upon once more to live with and to do great things in history. God grant that we may not be found wanting in our time, but may be humbly worthy of some part in that deathless society of which it was said that through faith its members "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises," because "out of weakness they were made strong."

III. *The Sequences of Christian Experience*



*We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation
worketh patience;*

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And hope maketh not ashamed.

—ROM. 5:3-5



SOME four hundred years ago there was a gathering in Germany of which Carlyle says, "It is the greatest moment in the modern history of men." This was the Diet of Worms at which, in 1521, Martin Luther stood before Charles V to defend himself against the charge of heresy. You will remember that, when he had finished his apologia, Luther said, "Here I stand; I can do no other; God help me." When it is used at a time like that, there is a kind of finality about the word "stand" which we all recognize. Once a man has conscientiously taken such a stand, it is, in Luther's phrase, "neither safe nor prudent" to abandon it. He must stay where he is and take the consequences.

In giving his own new meaning to this idea of taking a stand Luther was drawing upon a very biblical idea. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand." "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever." "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I

will speak unto thee." "Then came Jesus and stood in the midst." "He that standeth steadfast in his heart, doeth well." "By faith ye stand." "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able, having done all, to stand." "Stand therefore." There is something steadying and reassuring about this word with its confident suggestion of immobility and endurance.

Nevertheless, noble as the idea may be and constant as the metaphor is in both the Old and New Testaments, it is not wholly faithful to the mood of the Bible. For the Bible is, in the main, a record of the experience of men in motion. If you saw the scene of the Exodus, as it was so movingly portrayed in *Green Pastures*, where that seemingly unending procession toiled slowly across the stage, you had before your eyes the biblical picture of life. The whole Bible is nothing but the story of man's pilgrimage from the Garden of Eden to the City of God. Between those boundaries he has never found any abiding city. We cannot come nearer the vital truth of the Bible than in those words of Jesus, spoken on the journey up to Jerusalem, "I must go on my way today, and tomorrow, and the day following."

What is true of Jesus is in some ways perhaps even more true of that restless soul, Paul. If need be, he could stand, or at least counsel others to stand, but he was truest to himself when he was running the race, reaching forward to the things that are before, pressing toward the mark.

There came to my desk the other day a letter from a young friend in England. After paying its respects to run-of-the-mill news—the weather, food rationing, the lull in the bombing—the letter turned to bookish matters. "I have been disturbed," says the writer, "by an article which has come out in *Harper's* on American business with South America in the post-war years. This is apparently to be a process of ousting Britain and Germany and thus making the post-war economy of Europe even more diffi-

cult. Then I read Virginia Woolf's last book. Rather disappointing. Apart from all this I dip into Saint Paul from time to time. Paul is good for these times. I am quite certain that, even if Hitler were to conquer the world and try to make *Mein Kampf* the rule of faith, in time his words would be as if they had never been, while the Gospels and Epistles would never be stamped out, because they fill a deeper need than Hitler ever could. God can save by many or by few. Jesus and Paul had but a handful of followers, comparatively speaking, and were not daunted because there was so much in the world to be conquered. I know that God in man cannot be universally and forever obliterated. Paul does a lot to strengthen one. I'm all for him. He's not the stiff neck I lazily thought him to be." These simple, spontaneous words may encourage us, in easier and safer circumstances than those of the writer, to give heed for a moment to the moving words—moving in the literal sense—which we have cited from the Epistle to the Romans.

If, for example, you had asked Paul "where he stood" on this matter or that, I think he would have been hard put to it to answer you, because he seldom stood anywhere; and, on the whole, in spite of the heroic passage at the end of the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he counsels the good soldier of Jesus Christ to take his stand, the whole idea of taking stands is not native to Paul's mind. Life with him, the Christian life, was not a matter of staying put on one spot. Life was a process, and one's personal Christianity a history which begins and continues and in due time is to end. It is by the process we undergo rather than by the stand we take that we learn the true nature of our religion. Hence comes that very marked peculiarity of Paul's style, in which he strings out a succession of words, each being suggested by the one which has preceded it, and in turn anticipating another which is to follow. The result is a sentence very like the row of dominoes we used to set

up as children; give the first one a push and it topples over the rest, one after another. The text is a signal illustration of this peculiarity of style.

Nothing is more necessary at the present moment than hopefulness for our cause and our world. If we lose hope, we are on the way to defeat. But how are we to get the kind of hope we need? Plainly such a hope must be something more than the gambler's chance that things may fall our way in the end and something other than mere native high spirits or India rubber resilience. A religious man should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him. How does one get "a reasonable and religious hope"? In particular, where does Paul "stand" on this matter of hopefulness and its techniques? Well, Paul never "stood" there at all. He arrived at his indomitable hopefulness as the end of a succession of experiences and inner disciplines, each of which was part of a single consistent, consecutive process.

His point of departure is the fact of trouble. He sets out toward his goal with the bold proposition, "We glory in tribulation." That premise marks him, I fear, already in advance of most of us. It may possibly be that at some later time in life, a happier time, we shall be able to look back on the troubles of these days and glory in them. Men get, as Virgil knew, a perverse pleasure from viewing in retrospect ardors and endeavors they have survived. "Perchance it will be pleasant some time to remember these things." But for the moment it is not easy. A disinclination to glory prematurely may well be a mark of prudence. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as him that putteth it off."

But if we cannot yet glory in tribulation, we can do another thing, more timely and more wise; we can begin to make our mental peace with the fact of trouble. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." "In the world

ye shall have tribulation." These are hard sayings, but they are true. There are few sayings in the Bible, less native and congenial to our American tempers. We were launched into our political life upon the theory that we had a right to the pursuit of happiness, and however we may have failed the founding fathers at other points, we have not failed them here. We have had our troubles, it is true, but it is not our habit to humble ourselves before them and take them upon our shoulders, stooping to conquer.

And now we are as a people confronted with real trouble, trouble more grave than we have ever had to face before. Turn where we may, at home or abroad, and there is tribulation in our world. One is reminded of the majestic chapter on "The King's Way of the Holy Cross" in *The Imitation of Christ*:

Thou canst not escape the cross, whithersoever thou runnest, for go where thou wilt, thou carriest thyself with thee and shalt ever find thyself. Turn thyself outwards, turn thyself inwards, turn thyself upwards, turn thyself downwards, everywhere thou shalt find it.

Life in the world as it is today offers us no escape from trouble. Through the solitary discipline, by which we make our mental peace with this fact, each one of us has to pass. For we are confronted by the ancient, majestic, imperious truth of the world's tribulation.

And then, "tribulation worketh patience." Patience is the power to bear things. Trouble does not create patience out of nothing, but it does evoke it since strength to bear things is given us with life itself, an innate energy deeper than our reason's sway and far beyond anything which we might in advance impute to ourselves. Ask any doctor, and he will tell you that the ability of the human body to bear injury and pain is beyond all bounds which we call reasonable. How do men in public life, in times like these, bear "the

heavy and the weary weight" of their responsibilities without breaking under them? You and I fear that we could never do it; we wonder how other men can. We suspect that they take their burdens lightly. But this is not so. Were any one of us to be suddenly asked to bear public responsibility which seemed to him beyond his powers, he would find that with the task came also the unexpected strength.

No temptation [as Professor Moffatt translates the passage from Paul] has waylaid you that is beyond man's power; trust God, he will never let you be tempted beyond what you can stand, but when the temptation comes, he will provide the way out of it, so that you can bear up under it.

We need not worry; we shall be able to stand what we have to stand, for strength to do so comes from deeper sources than those of our own devising. This perhaps is what is intimated in that noble phrase in the last book of the Bible, written in a day of trouble, "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

"And patience worketh experience." Long, long before Paul wrote to the Romans, the patriarch said, "I have learned by experience." There is no substitute for that learning. "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?" It is a fair question, and a final question. Is your knowledge firsthand or secondhand? Some fifteen years ago we had with us here a quiet and very modest Englishman, who was teaching in our department of geology. He was fond of the out-of-doors and of nature's out-of-the-way places. Occasionally he would be found listening to a group of boys talking about mountain climbing, but he never had much to say on the subject. When he was gone, some one would ask, "By the way, who was that man?" Well, that man's name was Odell. On the morning of May 8, 1924, he had climbed alone from Camp VI high up on the final ridge of Mount Everest, not far beneath its summit, to see

what had happened to his friends, Mallory and Irvine, who had gone on two days before to pitch the final Camp VII. He did not find them; he did not find anything which could tell him what had happened to them. No one knows to this day what happened to them. "I glanced up at the summit above me," says Odell. "Was it as the Tibetans said the Goddess Mother of the Himalayas? Had I approached it with due reverence and singleness of purpose?" His was the aristocracy of an actual experience.

Life and the world will not be easy for us hereafter. But there is this to be said for having had one's lot cast at such a time: we belong to a generation which, as the history of mankind goes, must be called an experienced generation. We shall not be inexpert amateurs at life. We shall have learned by the hard way many things which those who live in quieter times can learn only by hearsay. We shall not need to read the lessons of life from a book, for we shall have learned by experience itself.

And finally you remember those two familiar lines of Milton:

Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.

Experience is the badge of maturity rather than immaturity. And it is interesting to notice that Milton's mind marches with Paul's. Mature experience need not mean disillusionment. On the contrary, experience breaks into prophecy. And what it prophesies, according to Paul, is hope.

"And experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." George Meredith once wrote, "Who can think and not think hopefully?" That is the way the mind works when it is running true to itself and at its top form. Hopeless thinking is the yield of a mind that is tired and missing fire. To this vote of confidence in the native hopefulness of the

human mind the Christian religion gives its own added confirmation.

No man who is a Christian can be finally and permanently hopeless for the cause which he has espoused and professed. His hope is, of course, something more catholic than a private desire for personal security and comfort. It is an unselfish concern for all sorts and conditions of men, men now living and men still unborn. This reasonable and religious hope is not had by any curious crystal gazing. It is not a way of stealing a march on the rest of the world. It is, rather, an untroubled confidence that the evil in the world is forever in process of destroying itself and that only to goodness may we impute a true survival value. This hope is a confidence in goodness and righteousness. In its simplest form it does not profess to foretell the day and the hour when the righteous cause shall prevail or the ways and means of its final vindication. But it does assure those who still must find in history their own ways and means for that vindication that they are on the winning side. This hope is, as another New Testament writer says, "an anchor of the soul," grounded on God.

Such, then, is the sequence of the inner disciplines by which, passing through patience and experience, the peace which we make with the fact of trouble becomes at last the source of a "hope that maketh not ashamed."

IV. *Religion's Two Worlds*



In earth, as it is in heaven.

—MATT. 6:10



THIS is Palm Sunday, which passes into Holy Week and brings us to Good Friday. A week hence will be Easter. If we are mindful to keep the Christian Year, we shall be thinking of what these days first meant, and, therefore, of what they ought always to mean as they come around again.

Not, indeed, that we stand still while time circles about us but rather that as we move on through the years, we come again and again upon certain aspects of nature, happenings in history, truths of experience, which seem to stand over against the chances and changes of life, constant and unchanged. These facts and happenings, however, never look twice the same. Our own attitude toward them and our understanding of them alter with the years and with our own maturing life. Each new time we see them differently, and if they are truly classic in their quality, we see more in them than we ever saw before whenever we meet them afresh.

We come slowly to the conclusion in the presence of these major constant facts in our world that we do not wish to tamper with them too freely or to alter them radically. They serve us best when we allow them to be what they

were and are. Thus we may begin our discipleship to Jesus dwelling upon his likeness to us; but as we come to know him and ourselves better, we become increasingly aware of an unlikeness. We say that our theology, as part of the sober thought of our age, is becoming more scientific in its method. A famous English editor of the *Manchester Guardian* used to say to his reporters, "Comments are free; facts are sacred." A feeling for the sacredness of historical facts, as of contemporary facts, is one of the signs of a disciplined as well as an honest mind. Thus the historical study of the life of Jesus, as we have it in the Gospels, has given us, to a degree that no generation before our own has known, a respect for the sacredness of its facts. I should be inclined to say that a willingness to let Jesus of Nazareth be himself, whatever the contrast between his life and ours and at whatever cost to our complacency, is one of the marks of a sincere Christian.

Think of the crucifixion. Every man who has ever suffered feels that he has a right to take his stand in the shadow of the cross. We may indeed believe that Christ's sympathy was so catholic and his heart so generous that he would deny no sufferer the respite of that shadow. But it is very easy to abuse the metaphor of the cross, and to put it in a false setting. Thus Mr. H. G. Wells says that his Invisible King must die on a cross, but he will die wrenching one hand loose from the nail, to shake a clenched fist in the face of his fellow men and at the Veiled Being with whom the mystery of things is hid. That is a caricature of the story of the crucifixion. It is an unwillingness to let Jesus be himself. For if you take away from the record the sayings, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" and "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," you have altered the original happening out of all recognition. It is well, then, on Good Friday to read the story of the cruci-

fixion just as it stands in the Gospels and to let it stand as it is.

Meanwhile, I am proposing as the theme for this first day of Holy Week an idea which lies behind, yet shines through, the record of all these days, that of events happening at two levels, in two worlds. This idea is anticipated in the familiar and almost threadbare phrases of the Lord's Prayer, "in earth, as it is in heaven." There is more than one way of repeating the Lord's Prayer, that is, in its *émphases*. Indeed, you will find disagreement as to its punctuation, different usages prevailing in different versions or prayer books. One of the most recent texts punctuates it as follows: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." On this reading the phrases about earth and heaven qualify only the immediately preceding petition for the doing of the will. As we usually say the prayer aloud, that is the interpretation which we give it by our timing and inflection. But it is at least an open question whether the two phrases under consideration are not meant to qualify all three of the initial petitions. The prayer would thus read:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
in earth, as it is in heaven.

Be this distinction as it may, the whole life and thought of Jesus and, at the last, his dying were sustained by the dual awareness of heaven and earth. Waldo Frank once said of Lincoln that the peculiar quality of religiousness which we feel in Lincoln's speeches—particularly the Second Inaugural—was due to his conscious attempt to live in two worlds at the same time. Our traditional vocabulary, as in the Prayer, calls these worlds heaven and earth. But

they may with perfect propriety be given other names: eternity and time, the substance and the shadow, reality and appearance, the ideal and the actual. In all our more important experiences more than one world is at stake.

Jesus lived constantly in two worlds at the same time. He was not an ascetic, a runaway from history and the society of men, a wholly other-worldly recluse. But neither was he a "worldly" man. He was in the world, but he was not of the world, whatever those words mean and however they are to be realized.

There are moods and moments of life when we get no little inspiration from that last paragraph in Spengler's book about *Technics*, his jeremiad pronounced upon what he believes to be our dying age of industrialism:

We are born into this time and must bravely follow the path to the destined end. There is no other way. Our duty is to hold the lost position, without hope, without rescue, like that Roman soldier whose bones were found in front of a door at Pompeii, who, during the eruption of Vesuvius, died at his post because they forgot to relieve him. That is greatness. That is what it means to be a thoroughbred.

Such a stand, such a sense of duty, and such dying are undoubtedly greatness. But that stand is a transaction at one level and in a single world only. The incident, as Spengler celebrates it, is unlike the story of the death of Jesus, in which some other world than this is felt as very present. Let us grant of this other world that it is the object of our faith and not, as yet, the stuff of our knowledge. Therefore, until religion passes out of the area which must be occupied by faith and its truths achieve something like mathematical verification, we must face the fact that our beliefs may not correspond to reality. Meanwhile, there is no doubt at all as to what Jesus believed; he believed in the two independent, yet interdependent worlds, which

the very idea of religion requires. And as the end drew near, the veil between the worlds was rent asunder for him by that faith.

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." "I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. My kingdom lies elsewhere." "Let not your heart be troubled; in my Father's house are many mansions."

Some of these sayings, it is true, come from the Fourth Gospel, and we do not press that Gospel for too great verbal accuracy in its record of the sayings of Jesus. Others of these sayings are cast in an ancient mould. Nevertheless, they all represent faithfully the aura which surrounds the story of the Passion of Christ. They bring heaven very near to earth; two worlds are met and mingled.

It is at this point that we are made aware of one of the striking differences between what may be called historic Christianity and the liberal Protestantism of our own times. We may still repeat the Lord's Prayer in full, saying by rote, "in earth, as it is in heaven," but so far as the conscious interest and emphasis go, we have been preoccupied with the first of these phrases to the neglect of the second. We have not given up our earnest effort to be religious, nor have we stopped praying; but we have tended to say, "Our Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth," and we have stopped there.

We have not gone on to say the second phrase for two reasons. First, we find it hard to imagine what can be meant by the word "heaven" if we try to think of it in terms of time and space. Heaven was once the not-too-far-off boundary of things, wholly credible and not wholly un-

imaginable. But today we have such preposterous reaches of time and space with which to reckon that the idea of an ultimate heaven simply gets lost in the infinite distances. As the mind travels endlessly into space [says Father Tyrrell]

it meets only orbs and systems of orbs in their millions, an infinite monotony of matter and motion, but never does it strike some boundary wall of the universe, beyond which God keeps an eternal Sabbath. The heaven that lay behind the blue curtain of the sky, whence by night God hung out his silver lamps to shine upon the earth, was a far deeper symbol of the eternal home than the cold and shelterless deserts of astronomical space.

And then, in the next place, we have had an uneasy suspicion that in the old days far too many persons used the thought of heaven as an escape mechanism by which to evade their moral responsibilities in this world. They seem to us to have accepted much too readily their part in man's inhumanity to man because heaven would in due time heal all the sorrows of that process. In retrospect they look like ethical draft dodgers, and we do not feel that men ought to be allowed to dodge their moral duties here and now. These, I think, have been the two main reasons why, when we say our prayers, we emphasize "in earth" and are content to let "in heaven" wait upon more knowledge of the nature of the universe and on a bettered social conscience. We have felt that, so far as our life on this earth is concerned, there is much to be said for Voltaire's adage, "Let us cultivate our own garden," and for Thoreau's whimsical dying remark, "One world at a time, brother, one world at a time."

Nevertheless, this concentration upon earthly affairs and this studied indifference to heavenly realities are probably the most radical break with classic Christian thought which

we in our time have made. Indeed, we are at this point so much out of step with the historic faith as we first meet it in the teaching of Jesus and as it has been professed over most of the intervening centuries, that one sometimes wonders whether we have the right to call ourselves "Christians." There is no little warrant for the fundamentalists' assertion that on their premises we are not Christians. The truth is that we do not think of ourselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth; we are mentally settled down here. Nor do we think of this world as a vale of soul-making, which has another and a further reference. Our heaven is here or nowhere.

It is, however, in times like these, periods of both public and private difficulty, that we realize how sadly we have impoverished the meaning of religion by our studied determination to keep it a matter of one world only, and that, this world. There is far too much truth in Canon Barry's statement, "To us the world is no longer a home. For in order to be at home in this world it is not, unfortunately, sufficient to disbelieve in another."

Is it not quite clear, therefore, that the moral and spiritual summons of the hour calls us to an attempt to learn how to say the Lord's Prayer in full and not in part? If we say "in heaven" only, abandoning earth's affairs to the powers of darkness, we shall, of course, be guilty of the old ascetic attempt to escape from life. Bad as the times are, we do not wish an escapist religion. We must keep our earnest concern for earth's proper interests, but we must now fortify that concern by the conviction that we are not fighting a lonely and losing cause in a nonmoral order; rather, that whatever good conscience we may have is matched and therefore warranted by a spiritual realm vaster and more enduring than any single human life or the sum of human history.

That is what the thought of heaven has always meant

when our religion has been at its best. The Jewish idea of the universe was that of a realm of eternal realities already existing prior to any creation: the people of God, the Law, the temple. What we see and know on earth as our societies and institutions is but an imperfect revelation of these realities, glimpses of them. Likewise, for Plato, whose modes of thought gave to early Christianity its classical statement, the only realities in the universe are ideas which exist in the mind of God; of these ideas earthly things are but copies and shadowy imitations. In either case, that of the Jew or that of the Greek, whatever we know on earth is imperfect, inconclusive. What we know here is nevertheless, a clue to the heavenly reality. By studying the copy and working at it faithfully we may get some intimation of the original.

It may well be that we cannot accept either of these simple schemes literally; but we have no modern substitute. Symbols, and all this is the language of symbolism, cannot be manufactured out of hand. They mature out of long experience of life and from deep feeling. Yet even our most modern modes of thought are not without some hint of ways in which these ideas may be stated in our vernacular. For example, Godfrey Hardy, the Sadleirian Professor of Pure Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, has just written a little book which he calls *A Mathematician's Apology*. I hesitate even to cite it, since I understand so little about pure mathematics. Yet, even as a layman in that purest of the sciences, I can see what he means by what he says; and what he says seems to throw some light on our problem. For the sake of brevity let me paraphrase his words. He says that the study of pure mathematics is probably an unprofitable occupation but is at least an innocent and harmless occupation. When asked whether such studies are useful, as most of the natural sciences are, he has to say no. Nevertheless, he goes on,

much of what is done in the field is permanent. It does not change. Furthermore—and this is the interesting part of his apologia—he says that the mental patterns with which, as a mathematician, he works and the conclusions at which he arrives do not seem to him webs spun out of his own fancy. They have what he calls “seriousness and depth.” They are so in their own right. Therefore, the task of the mathematician is not to discover or invent theorems, but to observe them. Pure mathematics, he concludes, is the rock upon which all subjective accounts of reality are shipwrecked. The number 317 is a prime, not because we think so, or because our minds work that way, but simply and solely because it is so, because mathematical reality is built that way. Then he adds, reflectively, if a man could give a convincing account of this mathematical reality, he would have solved most of the difficult problems of philosophy. And if he could include physical reality in his account of mathematical reality, he would have solved all the problems of philosophy.

Unless I wholly misread his argument, he believes that we have to do with two distinct types of reality, that with which pure mathematics is concerned and that with which the physical sciences are concerned. And if we could get the latter kind of reality rightly related to the former, we should know all things. He seems to admit that it is not easy to get them together, yet to insist that we may not give up the ever-renewed attempt to do so. I suggest, then, that we have here in most modern forms of thought a statement which reaffirms in its own terms the old pictorial language of our text, “in earth, as it is in heaven.”

If we take a man like this at his word, it would seem, therefore, that we have not solved the ancient riddle of heaven and earth by saying “earth” as boldly as possible and keeping silent when we come to “heaven.” The issue is apparently a real one, though the ways in which we state

it may vary. And if liberal Christianity insists upon thinking of religion in the terms of one order of reality only, that of this world, one suspects that "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from us and given" to another, let us say, to Professor Hardy, and all those for whom he is the spokesman, to persons who believe that there are two worlds and that, difficult as the task is, we must go on trying to live in both worlds at the same time. To translate the mathematical way of saying it into our religious equivalent, if we could give a convincing account of what we mean by heaven, we should have solved most of the problems of religion. And if we could then relate an accurate account of earth to the prior account of heaven, we should have solved all the problems of religion.

We cannot, therefore, reread the story of Holy Week and try to live it in imagination without saying the Lord's Prayer in full rather than in part. It is not enough to try to affirm this world by denying the reality of any other world. To save our civilization from going to hell we need, as men have seldom needed it, confidence in heaven. Little as we may hitherto have thought of these matters, we cannot believe that history is merely a process of "lighting fools the way to dusty death," nor can we believe that good men and brave, giving their lives for what we believe to be the just cause, are "lost in death's dateless night" and "perished as though they had never been." You remember what Bunyan said of his hero, that as he crossed the river, one could "hear all the trumpets sounding on the other side." Unless you are a settled cynic, a thoroughgoing sceptic, this is a day to be listening for "the trumpets sounding on the other side."

V. *Keeping the Feast*



Let us keep the feast with . . . sincerity and truth.

—I COR. 5:8



IN THE leading editorial on December 24, 1914, the London *Times* said, "Nothing would be easier than to talk of the mockery of Christmas this year." That was the first Christmas of the first year of the first World War. What is more, it was the first time for many years that anyone in Christendom had felt any sense of irony in keeping Christmas. Each recurring Christmas of earlier years had been, in spite of glaring imperfections in the state of affairs, a vote of confidence in a world which was slowly but steadily getting better.

If twenty-eight years ago men felt that Christmas was a mockery, it has not been easy to escape that suspicion at any time since. Put it how you will, the world has been disimproving. Now that they are over, we can look back on the intervening years and say of them what the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon said of his own equivocal times, "Those so great plagues they called peace."

So it is that only three or four days ago a critic from one of the Boston papers came out here for our carol service; and like the editorial writer of the *Times* in 1914, he came with what he called "that haunting sense of the incongruous about a Christmas service in wartime."

Most of us know what he means. Unless we are more than usually thick-skinned, we too have felt what our visitor calls the incongruity of the old words about "peace on earth, good will to men," if not even their mockery. It is of this mood that I should like first to speak.

May it not be that the very fact that we find the keeping of a war-time Christmas incongruous is itself significant? This felt incongruity means that, whatever the foreground of life may show, there is still in the background of our minds a conviction that the kind of world in which we are now living is neither ideal nor right, and that if we were only better men, things might be otherwise. It is much better to be troubled by such contrasts and contradictions than not to be troubled by them. If we were not troubled by them, this would mean that mentally we had parted company with the world of Christian ideals. Uncomfortable as our position in the nominally Christian lands may be, it is morally a more hopeful position for the world at large than that of those who can be bothered no longer by such incongruities. If you choose to use even the most ungenerous term you can find, there is more to be hoped for from the hypocrisies and insincerities of our imperfect Christendom than from the brutal consistency of the apostles of Antichrist.

In the next place, unless we have parted company altogether with the moral ideals of our tradition, there is much to be said for their reaffirmation just when the times are most out of joint. Do you know that little prayer of John Austin's, written in wartime three hundred years ago? It concedes what anyone must concede at such a time, the need of accepting the facts, but it also affirms what must always be the temper of a Christian.

Fix thou our steps, O Lord, that we stagger not at the uneven motions of the world, but go steadily on our way,

neither censuring our journey by the weather we meet, nor turning aside for anything that may befall us.

In some form or other this sense of steady direction has always been one of the major contributions of religion to history. Emily Dickinson put it in one matchless line:

The needle to the north degree wades so through polar air.

In slack and conventional days it may well be the duty of a Christian to do unconventional things, if only to save his religion from dying of platitudes and stale custom. But in unconventional times he reverses his field and does the conventional thing. Hence that fine inscription in the chapel at Stanton Harold in Leicestershire, which describes its building in the days of the English Civil War:

IN THE YEAR 1653
WHEN ALL THINGS SACRED WERE
THROUGHOUT THE NATION
EITHER DEMOLISHED OR PROFANED
SIR ROBERT SHIRLEY BARONET
FOUNDED THIS CHURCH:
WHOSE SINGULAR PRAISE IT IS
TO HAVE DONE THE BEST THINGS
IN THE WORST TIMES
AND
HOPED THEM IN THE MOST CALAMITOUS

Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet, was one of those resolute souls, not deterred from exercising his more generous and gracious tempers by the thought of their historical incongruity.

I quoted to you a few moments ago the first line in the newspaper notice of our carol service last week. In fairness to the writer and to our musicians I ought now to finish the sentence.

That haunting sense of the incongruous about a Christmas

service in war time was wholly dispelled in the Memorial Church at Harvard last night. All the qualifying clauses had been entered and the service was worthy of the University and of a civilized people. If the service had been broadcast to listeners abroad, it would have warmed English hearts and set Germans pondering these things in their own. Or, if propaganda is what our government wants, here is some of peculiarly high voltage.

Our American culture has always tended to be informal. We suspect ceremony and deliberately emphasize the virtue of spontaneity. But in times like these it is well to realize the part which festivals and holidays and holy days and ceremonies play in human life. True, they always tend to get divorced from the ideas which called them into being and thus to lose meanings which have constantly to be recovered. Nevertheless, however imperfectly they may coincide with the ideas that begot them, they serve, as the poet says, "To bind our days each to each in natural piety." A home or a college or a church or a state which dispenses too soon and too easily with its festivals is subtly inviting a disintegrating process to go on within its fabric. Ceremonies are not the bulk of life or its considerable, sober substance. But they are a kind of mortar which holds the separate areas of life together as a whole, be these areas those of widely separated years or of many different interests. We have always known that a divided life is an irreligious life, and that to be religious is somehow to have pulled life together around some major concern. Therefore, the keeping of festivals and the observance of ceremonies, however wooden and conventional they may have become, is a tacit confession that we are trying to live religious rather than irreligious lives, that we are looking for a binding principle which shall make out of the many different parts of our experience a simple, single life.

In my boyhood home, where there was never very much money to spare, there was a perpetual discussion between my parents as to whether or not we could afford to buy flowers, and it was a world where bought flowers were not so common as they are now. One parent said we could not afford to. The other parent said we could not afford not to. Happily for the effect on us children, the latter parent usually prevailed.

The same sort of option is forced upon us today. You will be hearing it said that we are living in a day when, there is neither time nor strength nor money for the usual observance of this great Christian festival. A case can be made for the thesis that we cannot afford this sort of luxury. But in view of the perverse faith of our enemy with his desire to destroy Christendom and in view of the steady-going part which ceremony plays in human life, I venture the suggestion that so far as keeping this Christmas is concerned, we cannot afford not to keep it.

And what of the idea behind the festival? For if the idea was worthless from the first and is now all but dead, no observance of ceremonies on our part can keep it alive much longer. "Where the body is, there the eagles are gathered together." That saying is as true of dead religions as of dead sins and vices. "Has he not heard," says Zarathustra of the old saint in the forest whom he met when first he came down from the mountain, "has he not heard that God is dead?" Has God's Son now died also with his senile Father in the Heavens? Zarathustra thought so and said so.

In writing to the Church in Rome Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." One sometimes suspects that Paul would not have said that unless he had been a little ashamed, or was afraid he might be; ashamed, not in the sense of having a bad conscience, but ashamed in the sense of feeling out of things, of knowing that he belonged

to a hopeless minority movement in the vast fabric that was Rome and the prodigal beauty that was Grece. After all, Paul had broken with his own race, an old, proud patrician people. He was also a citizen of Rome, born so; but now he was in the process of breaking with the dominant culture of his time. As churchman and citizen he had cut himself off from both church and state. When you see how being in the minority makes some men bitter and other men petty and ungenerous, it says a great deal for Paul's religion that he kept his charity. Being the sort of man he was, he must have felt at times his unclassed, lonely, and immediately negligible position as a pioneer for a cause that still had a long way to go. He may not have been whistling to keep his courage up when he said that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but he was certainly fully aware of the gap yet to be made up between the day in which he was living and that other far-off day of which he said, "Then cometh the end when Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power."

In this sense of the word there are many of us in these later times who have known, at a distance, something of Paul's mood in the awareness that Christianity is by no means the major system of ideas and the motive power that has been sustaining and driving the modern world.

But I put it to you soberly and directly this morning. Have you any real reason at this grave time to be ashamed of the Christian religion? You may confess with humble sorrow how imperfect our Christianity has been. You may feel more like being penitent than being proud. But do you feel that as a Christian you are on the losing side? This is a simple and a searching question. There are always in the world shrewd men who in emergency are willing to make what use they can of a force like Christianity for their own ends and thus for ends other than itself. We

accept that fact and are prepared to write such persons off as foul-weather Christians. The prior and the persistent question is, is the kind of life which Jesus lived and proposed to us now being demonstrated before our very eyes as a losing cause in history because it is built on sands of sentimentality rather than rocky reality?

For myself, it seems to me that in all truthfulness two things can be said in answer to this question. The first may be intimated in two or three lines from Wordsworth. There is in the fourth book of the *Prelude* the account of that strange dream which the poet had—a passage otherwise without parallel in his writings—of the Arab mounted on the camel, fleeing before a flood that was about to engulf the earth, and carrying a stone on which were engraved the Elements of Euclid. Those elements were to survive the deluge. Waking and reflecting on his dream the poet said:

Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations. . . .
Yet would a living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue
And kindlings like the morning—presage sure
Of Day returning and of life revived.

Such, most of us must feel, would be the fortune of the Christian religion, were even the worst misfortunes to overtake our time. Churches, creeds, and rituals in the forms we now know them might be so interrupted that they would not revive in just those forms. But most of us believe that the mind of Christ and his heart are among the indestructible things in the universe and after even the direst catastrophe would reassert themselves in something of their original beauty and simplicity.

And a second and final thing to say is this, that we are even now in the process of seeing Satan falling as lightning

from heaven. It takes him some time to fall; it is taking him longer than we like.

From morn to noon he fell; from noon to dewy eve.

That fall might well run on for years, since our adversary has

the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.

Nevertheless, we owe to our adversary a perverse thanks for having demonstrated to us the consequences of his plausible logic, of which we too have felt at times the sinister seduction. It is precisely because we now see the ends to which a coldly formulated, brutally followed anti-Christian policy must take men that we think better than perhaps we ever have thought before of our own as yet unrealized Christian way of life.

It is thus that a Scotch professor has just written:

I count among my friends a rather remarkable number of men of high intellectual distinction who have returned to the full Christian outlook after years of indifference to it, and I should say that in practically every case the renewed hospitality of their minds to Christian truth came about through their awakening to the essential untenability of alternative positions which they had been previously attempting to occupy.

For these reasons, then, we say with Paul that we are "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." And, thus, for this reason, we can heed with good conscience his summons, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . let us keep the feast with sincerity and truth."

VI. *The Walk to Emmaus*



And behold two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus. . . . And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

—LUKE 24:13, 14



MUSICIANS are familiar with a process known as modulation. It is the act of passing gradually from one key to another. The act retains by the logic of its successive steps a memory of the original key in which it started, at the same time that it launches the music finally upon a new key towards which it is moving.

The majestic stories of Easter are followed in the Gospels of Luke and John by a number of stories which can only be described as modulations from the record of the ministry of Jesus into the history of the Christian Church. By far the loveliest of these stories is that of the walk to Emmaus.

I am inviting you to think about two or three of its statements as being, in the first place, fitting to a Sunday not long after Easter, and in the next place, fitting to the times in which we are living. For it is quite clear, is it not, that our times represent a period of modulation in human history? While we remember the key in which the record of the past was written, we realize that we are groping our way to a different key in which the record of the future is to be written.

"And behold, two of them talked together of all these things that had happened." Apparently they had heard nothing of the happenings of Easter day. They knew only that they had followed Jesus loyally, that they had believed him to be their Messiah, and that instead of taking his kingdom in triumph he had died a shameful death as a common criminal, crucified between two malefactors. These were the things they were talking about on the road to Emmaus.

You have here in the simple statement about the earnest talk which passed between these men the record of the beginnings of the Christian Church. It is true that the institution had not yet been formally organized; there were no bishops and priests, no deacons and presbyters. There were no recognized sacraments or sermons or hymns; there was no New Testament. There were no creeds. There were no cathedrals. There was as yet nothing of that formal fabric by which today we identify a church. But the heart of the matter was already there. Here were two men talking about Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven.

If the Christian Church were ever to be diverted from those themes and were to find itself talking about other matters, it would lose its quality as a church and its distinctiveness as Christian. It might become a useful ethical-culture society or an interesting forum for the discussion of secular problems, but it would cease to be a Christian Church.

Let us admit that it is a tribute to the influence of Jesus, rather than a testimonial to our own virtue, that there still is in the Christian Church a great deal of just such talking as went on along that road to Emmaus. Although there are many superficial signs to the contrary, there is probably more such talking than ever before. For, in spite of much talk on other matters, we keep coming back and back to the familiar words of Jesus and his influence in the world of

men. And we are never wholly at ease, at least those of us who have professed and called ourselves Christian, if the manner of our thought and speech and life is found running in a direction opposite to the current of the Gospels.

Meanwhile, it is worth realizing in the presence of this story that so far as the Christian Church is concerned, the heart of the matter is to be seen in the story of the walk to Emmaus. Here were two men talking together about Jesus. Already the promise was in process of being made good to them, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That is not the whole truth of the historic Church; it is, however, the first truth and the one truth requisite for any church. "They talked of all these things which had happened." From just such talk all churches have come.

This simple situation discovers for us something of the nature of religion and the worth of religion. Tolstoi once said that the most important thing in life is for man to unite with man and the worst thing in life is for men to go apart from one another. There is no need to labor the truth of those words today. We are living at a time when nothing is more important than to find ways for man to unite with man and when, in spite of all our efforts, the worst thing is happening at a steadily increasing pace and men are going apart from one another.

Why is it that men cannot find a way to unite with one another today? I suspect it is because our world, at least in much of its public political life, has lost its sense of the existence of God and the reality of religion. We have lost the common ground on which the minds of men, often enemies, have for centuries met. That loss is due to many causes all of which have unhappily conspired together to destroy the meeting ground for the peoples of Christendom. Whether the loss is irreparable remains to be seen.

These facts have passed down from vast affairs into

the little worlds of our more intimate relationships until people in homes and industries and communities have an uneasy sense of the insecurity of the ties that supposedly bind them together and a fatal tendency to drift apart. What is wrong with our world is the suggestion, wholly recent and modern, that no one else but humanity itself is involved in human affairs, that we must strike straight for one another and deal directly with one another, and that we can do this successfully.

It seems doubtful whether any permanent human relationship can be established directly by two human beings, dealing only with each other. An enduring relationship has to be built on a third something or in the presence of a third someone. We need to have gone through the same experience together or to have shared some interest or cause together. All around us today in America are men in middle age who twenty-odd years ago were in France. They are now too old to think of going back again, but these same men will tell you without any affectation that they never knew any friendships like those of the Army and the War years.

There is a passage in an English novel of the last generation in which the writer describes his hero, who was in fact himself, sitting with a certain Mary Mardon by the bedside of her father, who was dying in the night.

All that night Mary and I watched in that garret looking out over the ocean. It was a night entirely unclouded, and the moon was at the full. Towards daybreak her father moaned a little, then became quiet, and just as dawn was changing into sunrise, he passed away. What a sunrise it was. For about half an hour before the sun actually appeared, the smooth water was one gently heaving mass of opaline lustre. The surpassing splendor of the pageant outside arrested us, and we sat awed and silent. . . . Then I went

back to London. I thought of all the ships which were at sea in the night. I thought of Mary. I thought of Mardon. The simultaneous passage through great emotions welds souls and begets the strongest form of love. Those who have known it feel a bond of sympathy, pure and sacred, which nothing can dispel.

That was the truth of those two men on the Emmaus road; their simultaneous passage through a great experience had wrought a bond of sympathy which nothing could break. These two men would always be friends. Religion knows nothing of any attempt to encourage men to strike straight for one another in the endeavor to be united. Whether it be in homes or in international relations, the attempt to get at one another directly seems never to succeed. We get at one another, we stay united, and we do not go apart from one another when we admit that there are more than any given two of us concerned, that there is also God as our common partner; there are truth and beauty and the right. Apparently we need this third partner in any human relation if it is to be enduring. Trial marriages in the world of human relations, whether personal, economic, or political, may be made in want of the idea of God; but a relationship which hopes and intends to endure requires in some form or other that third and common concern which we best know as religion. That is the deeper truth foreshadowed and even incarnated in the persons of those two disciples talking together on their way to Emmaus of that which they had known in common.

A little later on in the story we overhear their specific words. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." It would be utterly impossible to say how often in all the intervening centuries men have revived the spirit and even repeated the letter of those words. I have heard that verse said in so many words in

this twentieth century of a man who failed to do what his religious followers had hoped. That saying is classic; it is even a platitude.

When I was studying theology, it was the fashion to say that the first three Gospels were to be trusted as historical documents, because they were wholly unself-conscious and had no particular theological purpose. In the intervening years scholarship has radically changed at this point. We are now told, and probably rightly, that each of the Gospels reflects the point of view of one or another of the groups in the early Church. In particular, the Gospel of Mark, which I was taught to regard as the most naïve of all the Gospels, is now declared to be the most dogmatic and doctrinal of all. It is now said to be an argument, a reasoned brief, in an attempt to answer one question, and one only, "Why did the Messiah have to die?"

Whether this opinion be right or not, it is quite clear that this was the one problem which was uppermost in the minds of those two men on the road to Emmaus. They still believed that Jesus was the Christ, but they did not understand why all the things which had befallen him were necessary.

The hard problems of life are stated century after century in specific terms suited to their own times. We can now give answers, some of them political and ecclesiastical, others of them ethical, as to why Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross. That particular problem no longer troubles us as it troubled those two men on the Emmaus road. But the general problem will always remain. Why is it that our ideals and our earnest hopes do not come directly and easily true? Why do they so often have to suffer what seems to be apparent defeat? Why is it that none of the permanently precious things of life are made good to us without some middle period of struggle and sacrifice?

John Ruskin once said that the right to own a thing

rests upon the willingness to pay a fair price for it. Most of us would agree. I know no reason why we should not extend into the realm of our religious ideals a principle which in daily life we recognize as valid. We have to work, and we have to sacrifice, and sometimes we have to suffer or bring suffering to others for the things we care for deeply in the here-and-now world. There is no reason to suppose that the things which are God's are to be had by any easier process. And in our better moments we realize that we should not value them if they were to be had for less than their fair cost to us.

The death of Christ is no exception to the deeper processes of experience. It may have needed their sober second thoughts to help those two men on the Emmaus road understand just that. And it will often take our sober second thoughts to persuade us that we are not to have that for which religion stands at no cost to ourselves. When David said, "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing," he spoke out of mature rather than immature experience. Here are you and I thinking about our world, its prejudiced and so problematical peace, and the part which our own country ought to play in the world's future. Why have the world's dreams and hopes of peace come to so little? "Peace," says à Kempis, "is what all desire: but not all care for the things which pertain to peace." We cannot offer to the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth that which doth cost us nothing.

And finally comes what is perhaps the most lovely single saying in this whole story of the walk to Emmaus. "He was known of them in breaking of bread." This was a gesture so familiar that it could not be mistaken, an act done in so individual a way that there was no mistaking him who did it, yet a very homely, commonplace act.

We had on the Divinity School faculty in other years two men who saw, each in his own way, deeply into the

Christian religion. One was William Wallace Fenn; the other, Francis Greenwood Peabody. Towards the end of their lives both of these men, each quite independently of the other, said to me; "There are two kinds of Christian history: one the formal, external history made of councils and creeds and actions formally taken by church bodies; the other a hidden stream of personal Christian piety that changes very little from century to century, that often flows beneath the surface of history, but which is always running clear and clean and true to form when it wells up among plain people." Both Professor Peabody and Dean Fenn said that they wanted to write this latter history because it was the true history of Christianity. If that history were ever to be written, it would be simply an elaboration and illustration of the words of the Emmaus story, "He was known of them in breaking of bread." Even in our own times we shall still look in vain to the superficial happenings of the age to reveal to us that which we seek, some clear intimation of the influence of Jesus. We shall continue to see it, as men have always seen it, in acts which are so simple and humble that they never get into the newspapers, much less the history books. Yet this is today, as it always has been, the true history of Christianity, which survives and persists when that which is more formal, more obvious, but less vital is forgotten.

I should like to leave with you two impressions, snapshots from an evening in a country hotel this last week.

The first is the most commonplace thing in the world; the papers never mentioned it—why should they—an unutterably lovely sunset, spread out with the wanton, careless prodigality of nature on a scale that man with all his wit could never compass, filling the whole western horizon from south to north. It was like an artist playing with colors with infinite joy and abandon, changing them from moment to moment only to wash them out at the last in

darkness, as a painter might have enjoyed some half hour of creative idleness in a studio. Yet there it was over against all the grayness of the times, as it still will be when man's inhumanity to man shall have spent itself. It was as though some spirit of peaceable beauty were made known to anyone who would just lift his eyes to that western sky.

And the same evening just a few words passed with an old lady to whom I was speaking for the first time. We fell to talking about the Quakers, and the way that whatever happened, they were there with what resources they could muster to feed the hungry. They were there in Austria; they have been and they are there in Spain; they are trying to get into Poland. They are known not in national policies or formal truces and treaties. They are known in the breaking of bread. And I said, "It's a wonder how they get into all these places, but they deserve to." And she said, "Yes, they mean business." That I suppose is really the trouble with a great deal of what professes to be Christianity in our world. It doesn't yet mean business. But when you come to so simple and unequivocal an act as the breaking of the bread, then, perhaps you can understand how it was that those two men on the road to Emmaus knew beyond all question of a doubt that the Christian religion had not suffered defeat and was not finished and done for.

VII. *A Sound Investment*



And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, and I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

—JER. 32:9, 10, 15



THIS is a simple story of a deal in real estate. It is the sort of transaction which has happened ever since men gave up being nomads and settled on the land. You can find its parallel to this day in any evening paper or at any registry of deeds. The property is described, the titles are examined, the money is passed, and the whole affair is duly witnessed and recorded. It is the most commonplace sort of story imaginable. And one may very properly wonder why a prophet, whose sayings and writings were of such dimension that they have been preserved for some twenty-five hundred years, should have thought it worth his while to interrupt his account of God's words to him and his words in God's behalf to the people with this mundane and matter-of-fact reference to the buying of a field, probably a few scrubby, rocky acres in the town of Anathoth, just to the north of Jerusalem.

The significance of this deal lay, however, not in the fact itself, but in its setting, the time when it was done, and the

place in which it was done. The times were as bad as they well could be. Jerusalem was being besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Jeremiah was not merely shut up in Jerusalem; he was doubly shut up within Jerusalem because he was on his way to prison. And he was going to prison for what was in substance mutiny or treason. He had publicly said that the city would fall and that Zedekiah would be carried away captive. Zedekiah thought quite naturally that under the circumstances it was better not to have that kind of man loose. And it was at this moment that the Lord said to Jeremiah, in substance, "As to that piece of family property which is for sale, buy it in."

I offer you this story of an ancient negligible deal in land as a parable for the present day. Here is a commonplace and conventional act, which of itself was nothing more than a matter of routine and record. But it interrupted a prophecy and got into the Bible because it was done under the most unlikely conditions, in circumstances which were both unconventional and critical. The buying of the field, and the meticulous attention to all the details of the transaction were, on the one hand, the prophet's own sober second thoughts about life and, on the other hand, an object lesson, a silent sermon to those who were witnesses of it.

Another writer in the Old Testament tells us in a familiar passage that

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun . . . a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted . . . a time to get and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to cast away.

He might have added that there is a time to do customary, habitual things and a time to do unusual things and that part of the wisdom of life lies in knowing which kind of time it happens to be at the moment.

Some of you will remember the book which John Livingston Lowes wrote a few years ago on *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, which defends the thesis that originality lies in an unerring instinct as to the right relation of conventionality to unconventionality. It is easy enough, he says, citing some of the more formal poets, to be always conventional; it is equally easy to be always unconventional. The difficult thing in life is to marry the two at the right moment.

In general, we shall be somewhere near the answer to our problem if we say that, when one of these ways of life is the fashion of the moment, we shall be well advised deliberately to court the other. There is, for example, something extraordinarily steadying and reassuring in the sight of some man doing a routine, regular thing in the midst of a world that seems to have gone mad. I had a friend who was a fleet surgeon in the British Navy during the first World War. He was aboard the *Malaya*, one of Beatty's cruisers, during the Battle of Jutland. Those few ships for all the early hours of the battle took the concentrated fire of the whole German high seas fleet. The *Malaya* herself had been holed on the water line. She had had two or three direct hits on her gun turrets, and falling shells had gone down into the ammunition hoist. The ship was afire at more than one place. Most of her upper works were gone and between decks was a shambles of dead and dying. The surgeon went on deck for a moment in the middle of the battle for a breath of air, and not far away were two stokers who had come up a companionway for the same purpose. They were talking intently, and the surgeon overheard one of them say to the other, "Well, wot I says is, 'e ought to 'ave married 'er." One can understand why it is said that in most wars England loses every battle but the last.

That field in Anathoth, and its transfer, is a parable of life. Let us look at it a little more closely. The land had

one or two restrictions on it. To begin with, according to law, no title could be given in perpetuity. The Lord had said, "The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." You might have, so to speak, a long term lease; you could not have it in perpetuity. Furthermore, there was always within any given family a right of redemption, that is, if a piece of land came on the market, it was both the right and the duty of some kinsman of the seller to buy it in.

Still more particularly, this plot of land at Anathoth fell within the provision made for the Levites. For when the land of Canaan was divided up among the tribes, so runs the old story, the Levites were given no single area. They were merely allowed to own houses and fields wherever they happened to be. And such lands could be redeemed at any time. Anathoth was a Levite town, and Jeremiah traded within these laws.

All this is long ago and far away; yet there is a kind of instinct for religion in it. It would probably be a good thing for the soul of a people if every such transaction were conditioned by the ancient qualification, "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is God's." Mr. Aldous Huxley has been telling us that the heart of all true religion is nonattachment—nonattachment to things, nonattachment to possessions. The truth is, whether we like it or not, that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth and that in the most literal sense we have here no abiding city. Half of the battle of life is making one's mental peace with that fact; but once you have made your peace with it you are a freer and happier man.

Meanwhile, for the purposes of such tentative ownership as is possible in this world, there is much to be said for the old provision under which Jeremiah operated, that there should be within a single family not merely the right but the duty of redemption. Something very deep in us,

and not to be lightly dismissed, prompts the familiar and often heard words, "I should hate to see it pass out of the family." It was within the limits of such a society, bound together by blood and affection, that men first learned the nature of religion. You may say that it was a small school and a narrow school, a school liable to breed bigotries. All this is true. Yet even at this late date we are hard put to it, in our thought of God, to do more or better than say, "One is your Father and all ye are brethren." At any rate, we can attach a meaning to those words, and they can be touched by emotion, which is more than can be said of many words about religion.

If, then, some kinsman in a common religious tradition finds himself in doubt, distress, perplexity, you have a duty to reaffirm his faith for him against the time when that faith shall revert to him. You may not sit passively by and see his part of a common spiritual heritage pass over into the hands of persons who do not value it. This right and duty of the redemption of mortgaged and imperiled lives all over Europe today is part of the plain duty of the Christian Church. It is, indeed, one of the things that churches are for.

All this would have been implicit in the story of the sale and purchase of that field in Anathoth, had it happened in quiet times. But the transaction gained, as we have intimated, much greater weight because of environing conditions.

It is true that, as Jeremiah had prophesied, Jerusalem fell and the people were carried away captive. Therefore, in commanding him to buy his cousin's field, God was not trying to give him short-term comfort. But God did intend him to understand that human life would go on, and more than that, human life as he knew it and loved it. The values for which the field in Anathoth stood were to be enduring and should be again possessed and enjoyed. Hence the

entire fitness, indeed the religious duty, of the formal act which witnessed to that faith.

It would be difficult to find in history a more confused time than the one in which we are now living, or from the standpoint of Christianity a more unconventional time. For centuries western Europe has given at least lip service to the moral conventions of Christianity. No one professes that those ideals have ever been realized. But always in the back of the mind they have been there as a felt obligation, and they have provided a meeting place, a talking ground for men otherwise at variance with one another. The peculiar difficulties of the present hour arise from the candid repudiation in many quarters of the traditional moral conventions which hitherto have provided means of communication between races, states, and classes. Most of the hard problems of moral strategy and tactics arise from this entirely fresh situation.

It is, therefore, a time for people who still profess and call themselves Christians not to be ashamed or afraid of what may look like conventional Christian thoughts and acts. Let us not make the fatal error of supposing that Christianity in the Western world has come to the end of its tether. We have tended to make two mistakes in our thought of our religion. The first is the assumption that the pronouncement by Jesus in the Gospels of the absolute moral ideals for the Kingdom of God was also an automatic translation of those ideals into facts. We have made the same mistake about the classical American statements as to democracy. This is the error into which all idealists easily slip. And the second mistake is the assumption that at some time in the past, let us say in the thirteenth century, the Golden Middle Ages, or the Colonial period of American life, Christianity was much more fully true than it is now. In spite of many superficial signs to the contrary, it is a fair question whether there were ever more serious and

devoted individual Christians in the world than there are today.

In some form or other the Christian religion is going to pass on and over into the permanent life of Europe and America when the present crises are past. Its churches may be altered and its theology changed, but "the infection of an uneasy conscience," as Professor Whitehead has it, and the stimulant of high hopes which has been set running in our systems are much too powerful forces to be got out of our systems by any single historical emergency.

Meanwhile, it is the task of us who have the chance to preach and practise our faith unhindered to carry on with good conscience and good hope. Do you remember the story which is told of Napoleon's mother, how, when he was at the very zenith of his fortunes, his mother in Corsica was seen tucking away a few sous and francs? "But why do you bother to do this," said a neighbor, "when your son has everything at his feet?" The wise old woman answered, "He will want it when all that is over." So the world will want the homely daily thoughts and deeds of our familiar Christian life when all this that is abroad in the world to-day is over.

We should be peculiarly insensitive to the moral problems of our time if we were not invaded now and then by cynical moods in which we ask one another, "What is the use of going on any longer with a farce like Christmas?" But we shall be peculiarly faithless to the deeper genius of Christianity if we do not realize that all for which it stands is doubly obligatory—its silent brief for the intimate human ties of life, its celebration of plain people and homely things, its heavenly songs which have never yet come down to earth. People the world over, thwarted, baffled, frustrated for the moment, know as they did not know in 1914 or 1918 that the things which belong to our peace are in the keeping of the tempers and purposes of a re-

ligion like Christianity. If I had no other reason for believing in Christianity, I should believe in it because the doctrines which oppose and deny it today are so patently suicidal.

These things being so, we ought with good conscience and even with a certain serenity to keep up the usual practices of the Christian life. As Schiller said, "Thy America is here or nowhere," so we can say, "The world's peace is for us here or nowhere." Only, we may not let our religion be for us an anodyne or an escape device, some ascetic or sentimental flight from reality.

So, if one may paraphrase the old story of Jeremiah, "I did the familiar things, I remembered all who loved me, I thought of those whom I could still help, and I went to church and said my prayers as I have always done, because the Christian religion shall still be believed and professed and practised in this our world."

VIII. *Faithful in the Things That Are Another's*



If ye have not been faithful in the things that are another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

—LUKE 16:12



THIS verse is not one of the best-known sayings of Jesus. It is slipped in at the end of a parable in Luke, and a parable which in itself is not easy to understand. When we have finished with the parable, we are left with so much perplexity as to what it means that mentally we do not go on to this final sentence in the section, which is added as a kind of afterthought. It is as when we hear someone speaking but do not attend to what he is saying because we are thinking about something else.

So it is with the text. It is inconspicuously placed; it is not stressed or given any striking setting. It is merely appended to an already rather obscure story, and unless one is alert and on the watch, it is apt to slip by unnoticed. Indeed, let me ask you, have you ever noticed it? You certainly know many of the sayings of Jesus well; you are reasonably familiar with the Gospels; but did this verse in Luke ever catch your attention and start you thinking about it?

In one sense of the word there is nothing unusual about

it or out of character so far as the teaching of Jesus is concerned. It is all of a piece with most of what he had to say. But it does remind us again of a fact which we are very likely to forget, that the teaching of Jesus is fairly radical and original. Dean Inge says that "real Christianity is a revolutionary idealism, which estranges conservatives because it is revolutionary and estranges the revolutionary because it is idealistic." The text is a case in point. It runs true to the form of most of the mental and moral processes in the teaching of Jesus in that, from the standpoint of common sense, it seems to get the order of things wrong; it puts the cart before the horse.

We ordinarily say to children and go on saying to young people: "Learn first how to take care of your own things, and some day you may be able and ready to take care of other people's things." This is common sense. But Jesus puts it the other way around. Learn how to take care of other people's things, and then in due time you may be allowed to have your own things. What does he mean? Is he right?

The problem to which the text addresses itself is the old stubborn question, "What shall I do with myself?" Everyone asks himself this question, and if the answers are only stopgaps, the question keeps recurring and has to be answered again and again. Indeed, this is one of the two or three persistent and important problems to which all the great religions of the world address themselves. Every religion has an implicit or an explicit answer to the question, "What shall I do with myself?"

The answers are simple and familiar. I shall amuse myself, I shall enjoy myself, I shall divert myself, I shall educate myself, I shall express myself, I shall discipline myself, I shall deny myself, I shall lose myself, and I shall perhaps in the end find myself.

The natural man inclines to the first of these answers.

The simplest and in many ways the most inviting answer to our question is that proposed by the search for pleasure: I shall enjoy myself. It sometimes seems as though half of the business of society were concerned with providing means for giving that answer to the riddle of the self.

Universities, concert halls, libraries, art galleries, all give a more sober and, if the truth be told, a more permanent answer to the question by providing means for us to educate ourselves, to improve our minds and our taste. These answers are sincere and helpful and wholly reputable. But they are answers which still minister to self-centered lives. Any one of us who is in a University office is familiar with the student who comes in to get advice, the type for whom his own self is by far the most interesting and important thing in the world. I remember bearing patiently for two years with one such man who regularly brought me a kind of ledger of himself, on which he entered items pro and con, his liabilities of nature and character and his assets, the things he could do and couldn't do. We checked over his books once a month and balanced the account. Finally, I had to tell him that the bookkeeping was getting so complicated I could not follow it, and he had best look up a more competent chartered accountant. He was dead in earnest, but in a strange way he was rather pathetic. His perspective was all wrong.

The major religions of the world have never agreed with what might be called direct answers to the question, "What shall I do with myself?" as given by the natural man. They have never felt that enjoying yourself, or expressing yourself, or asserting yourself, or even educating yourself and improving yourself were really the truth of life and the secret to living.

They have as a matter of fact always been skeptical about self-assertion and self-culture and have seemed to say, "You will never be happy and at peace as long as you are

self-centered." The real secret of religion is to get rid of self-centeredness, even though it be decently dressed up as self-culture and self-expression. Thus the world in general says that pleasure is one of the answers to the riddle of the self. But the New Testament says, "Christ pleased not himself."

Hence the prominence of the general idea of self-discipline and self-denial in all of the great religions. Hence the stubborn streak of asceticism in most great religions, carried often to the point which any doctor would call unhealthy and any psychiatrist would call abnormal. Nevertheless, there it is, and neither the doctors nor the psychiatrists will ever get this strain out of religion though they may try to prevent its excesses.

A great teacher here of a generation ago said that the two major religions of the world thus far are Buddhism and Christianity. The strain of self-denial is strong in both. In Buddhism it is carried very far. The whole object of the Buddhist discipline is the diminution of desire and thus finally the destruction of the self. Buddhism is a studied and technically matured way of getting rid of your self. It is from the standpoint of common sense almost a suicidal faith.

The Christian religion is not so negative. It proposes to be positive in the end, but it does not strike straight for that end. It goes the long way round. It seems, at first, to be heading in a direction quite away from its goal. Jesus did not propose to destroy the self; he proposed to fulfill it. But he seems to be saying to any one of us, "The self you now are is not the self you may be or the self that God has in mind for you; it is not in fact your real self. That self you have never realized, perhaps have never even suspected. There is far more in you than you now realize, a self that is beyond what you now are. The way to find and realize that self is to practise unselfishness in the terms

of your present self. If you can really succeed in losing the self that you now are, you may find the self that you ought to be and are capable of being, the self that God wants for you and that religion can give you." Religion is not, then, a game which you play with your present self, hiding yourself one moment, then finding the same self again just around a corner. It is rather a perpetual process of outgrowing yourself, so that yesterday's self seems something that has actually been lost in the process of finding and becoming today's self. When we think of ourselves as we were ten years ago and as we now are, we can understand what all this means. For life is like that. But it is hard to make up our minds that we must lose the self which we now are and abandon it for the sake of some vague, unseen, unknown self of ten years to come. Yet that is what the Christian religion proposes to us as a way of life.

The text, then, is one of the many passages in the teaching of Jesus in which this idea, constant and characteristic with him, is put in picturesque form. Jesus did not have a great many different things to say. He had only a few things to say, but he said them in many ways and with marvelous skill. He was in this matter what we call in common life a "genius."

He is talking at the end of the parable and in this sentence, of life's possessions, but also of life's interests and life's employments.

Take our own kind of life here, what we call "academic" life. We have been living through a time in which, as the jargon goes, the curriculum is student-centered, not subject-centered. The modern problem is not what can you put into a student but what can you get out of him. The whole theory is that there is a fund, as it were, of latent knowledge in each of us waiting only to be awakened and evoked. "Truth," said Browning in a famous passage, "is within ourselves, and *to know* consists in finding a way for the imprisoned

splendor to escape." Therefore, in the modern student-centered academic world, beginning with the Montessori system in the kindergarten and going on until the candidate has written his doctoral thesis and received his Ph.D., the whole process is one which keeps the student keenly self-conscious and often makes him far too self-centered. All the while he is primarily concerned with the things that are his own. When he gets out into the world, he cannot understand why the world does not take him and his affairs at his own valuation. Now all this is a useful and needed correction of a long-time habit of pounding into childhood and youth ideas that mean nothing to them, that never come alive, and that are perhaps lifeless from the first. But all this is also a process that somehow is not characteristically religious in the Christian sense. It is not religious because it is not mentally unselfish enough.

If the text were to be translated into the terms of education, we should say, "Learn to deal fairly and conscientiously with the minds and the ideas of other persons, and then perhaps you will come to the time when you will have the right to a mind of your own, when your ideas will be important." Our education is never complete until we have realized that our minds are something that we arrive at rather than something we start from. When we have made that discovery, we have had an experience of conversion such as religion knows.

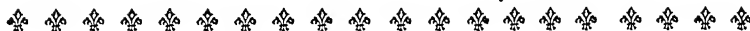
I have said these things because now into our lives, which, left to nature, are almost always self-centered and, left to schools and colleges, have tended to be encouraged in self-consciousness and self-culture, there comes the drastic and imperious fact of the war. Our private projects have to be put aside. No one is very much interested in our intimate forms of self-expression. There isn't much time given to leisurely self-culture. We have to think about many things which we never thought about before and which at first

mean little to us and have no immediate connection with our lives. Our interests, tasks, and aims now have to be big, impersonal, remote. Whether we would have chosen it or not, we are having to be faithful in things that come to us as the concern of other men than ourselves. History today simply will not allow us to live selfish lives with our own affairs as our center of interest.

Well, what may this mean in the terms of our religious life? It means that if we interpret our time truly and order our lives rightly, we have, as we have never had before, a chance to find in the end things that shall be our own. We have a chance to find a self that we might otherwise have missed. But if we are to find that self, we have to be faithful in the meantime in the things that are another's.

I remember a friend of mine, a Boston surgeon, a deacon in a parish of which I was minister. He once said, "It has taken me half my life to find out that my task in life is not to make something of myself, but to find a job that is worth doing and then to lose myself in it." He had been in these terms converted to Christianity. We again have that chance today.

IX. *Learning to Speak Out*



They that feared the Lord spake often one to another.

—MAL. 3:16



PAUL divides life and the world into "things that are temporal" and "things that are eternal."

We cannot begin to grasp all that is meant by the word "eternal"; but of one meaning we may be reasonably certain: eternal things achieve a certain immortality in history. Our secular name for them is "classics."

Many parts of the Bible, its most familiar and loved parts, belong to this classical world of eternal things. So we should reckon the best of the Psalms, the Book of Job, parts of Isaiah, the sayings of Jesus, the meditations of John, and certain lyric passages in the Epistles. Age does not stale them. They are as true now as when they were first written, and we cannot conceive of any changes in the structure of society or the course of history which will make them untrue or any less true than they were and still are.

On the other hand there are some parts of the Bible which, so far as we are concerned, belong to things temporal, such as the tedious genealogies, the elaborate Levitical laws, and indeed the whole statistical side of the Old Testament. The same is true of much of the complicated history of those far-off days. It is all very well for Emerson to insist that "every man can live all history in his own

person," but it takes no little study and much imagination to be able to relive the political relations of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Persia, and Greece, as they form the background for the history of the Jews. Once you get into it, it is true, the history is interesting, but there is no denying that it is ancient history. At this late date we can hardly defend the thesis that no one may expect to be called a Christian in ignorance of the date of the battle of Carchemish. And we must agree with Martineau that, while conscientious antiquarianism is admirable, there are "some souls of more impatient affection" who must reach God by more direct means.

And yet every once in a while as you turn the pages of the books of the Minor Prophets, who were mainly involved in minor world politics, some sentence seems to leap off the page and come alive. You remember that when Allenby was busy with his campaign in Palestine, he found that the books of Samuel and Kings were still useful military manuals. He read them as he went along, following the seacoast routes and the defiles up from the coast to the central ridge of the country, which of necessity have been taken by every raider and conqueror from time immemorial.

So it is with many a sentence in an otherwise ancient book of the Old Testament. If you follow the lead of that one verse, it will open up a whole scene and situation to you, and you find something in your own circumstance to match that of the man who wrote it. Here, then, is the book of Malachi, the last book in our Old Testament. There are not more than two or three verses in the book which have become part of our second mental nature. Most of us will have forgotten where the verses came from in the first instance. The bulk of the book is relatively unknown even to those of us who read the Bible regularly. When did you last read the prophecy of Malachi?

The book was written some years after the Jews had

returned from captivity and during a discouraging period of reconstruction. Let me quote Canon Driver's brief account of the times:

The situation in Judah at the time when Malachi prophesied was one of depression and discontent. The expectations which the earlier prophets had aroused had not been fulfilled; the restoration had brought none of the ideal glories promised by the Second Isaiah; bad harvests had increased the disappointment; the Lord, they argued, could no longer be the Holy God, for he was heedless of his people's necessity, and permitted sin to go unpunished; to what purpose, therefore, should they concern themselves with his service. . . . The priests performed their offices perfunctorily; they expressed by their actions, if not their words, a contempt for the service in which they were engaged. . . . A spirit of religious indifference and moral laxity began to prevail among the people.

This account of affairs does not sound like ancient history. It sounds uncomfortably like our own times. It is a free, yet not unfaithful, description of many of the tempers that have been abroad since 1918, as we have drifted through a period of depression and perplexity into another war.

Now what did Malachi have to say to right-minded persons at a time like that about the conduct of life? The book is markedly unsentimental; it holds out no cheap solace and is, indeed, filled with many sober warnings. But there is in these few chapters a good deal of common sense proffered to those who are willing to accept it. And one of the things which Malachi says is this, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

James Brown, the Master of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge, said of the poet Gray, just after Gray's death, that "he never spoke out." Matthew Arnold made those four

words the theme of his famous critical essay on Gray. Arnold seems to have regarded it as a fault in the poet that he never did "speak out."

Many Christians are like that; they "never speak out." Why do we find it so hard to speak out about religion? Various answers to this question suggest themselves, some creditable and others less so. We are, for example, shy and puzzled. We are like Peter who "wist not what to say" and therefore very wisely kept still. Religion is concerned with vast and mysterious matters and we have not got our thoughts in order. The profoundest remark I have ever met on English style was found in a paper handed in to a schoolmaster friend of mine by a boy in his class, "It is very difficult to express to other people ideas which one has not oneself." Religion is not without that difficulty. Furthermore, we do not like to be thought professionally pious. Amos went out of his way to insist that he was only a plain man, a farmer and a herdsman, not a professional prophet. We like him for his insistence upon his lay status. Again, we do not want people to infer that we think we are better than we really are, and the careless use of religious language invites that suspicion. Above all, we trust the instinct which tells us not to make our inner life too public, for there is no surer and quicker way of destroying our own feeling for our private sanctities. Altogether there are a good many valid reasons for not "speaking out" too often and too freely about religion.

But there comes a time, whether in the life of the individual or the history of a people, when it is a mistake not to speak out, whatever the risk of misrepresenting ourselves in so doing. Malachi thought that he was living in such a time. I wonder if ours is not another kindred time.

In the first place, we owe it to ourselves to speak out. It is true that our deeds will always speak louder than our words and that men will get a more correct impression of

us from what we do than from anything we may say. Nevertheless, words are the first and the most natural outlet for all that stirs in the inner life. A life filled with busy deeds of which we can say nothing is not self-explanatory. A man should be able to speak, simply and without affectation, about what he is doing.

The religious life is for most persons today an intimate and very personal thing. We are no longer content with the impersonalities of great institutions. "A man's religion," says the novelist, "is the answer to the problems that have been put to him, not those which have been put to other men." Failure to find one's own answer and then to give it in good faith is a mark of an imperfectly religious life, if not of irreligion. If inhibitions and repressions are bad in other areas of our nature, they are bad here. False modesty and prudent scruples which counsel silence may work us vital hurt. There is a point in the history of every thought when it is dangerous to leave it any longer unframed in words and unspoken. Thereafter you can assure yourself of its importance or its truthfulness only by speaking it out. That very act gives it a reality which, while still unspoken, it must always lack. This is the secret and the psychological warrant of the confessional. The confessor need not be a church official; he may be and often is a teacher or a doctor. At his best he is a friend, since as Emerson says, "a friend is a person before whom I may be sincere."

When we speak out, we must struggle to speak naturally. The furniture and apparatus which attend public religion are, alas, so formal that they tend to breed in us, when we talk of such things, an artificiality of tone or cadence. Even the layman lapses into the "pulpit" manner. We are unduly hushed; we intone our words or give them false emphases. Nothing is harder than to speak naturally about religion. Yet all true helpers of humanity have won that

power by self-discipline. To the initial courage to speak at all we must add the mature power to speak naturally.

We owe it not only to ourselves to speak out; we owe it to one another. The killing thing in life is a sense of loneliness. If solitariness begins to gnaw at our vitals and there is no felt human companionship round about, we become timid, bitter, and discouraged. Religious men have always been liable to an initial loneliness in their experience, but they have never been content with it. They have sought and found companionship in God and in their fellow men.

The fact of companionship is in some ways more important than its content. A common interest which is shared together may often seem rather trivial, but the comradeship bred by the act of sharing is not trivial. Browning's couple in *By the Fireside* are sharing together their pleasure in an Alpine valley, and then they find each other:

The forests had done it . . .

Their work was done—we might go or stay;

They relapsed to their ancient mood.

Nature and society have many devices for saving us from our solitariness and setting us in families or in circles of friends. The end justifies the means but still depends on the means. Of these many means, talk, good talk, candid talk, is the best. He will always be a little lonely who never speaks out.

So I remember with gratitude one wintry night in a mill city in Massachusetts where I began my ministry. A group of us had arranged a meeting in the interest of some social service cause and had persuaded Florence Kelly to come up from New York to speak to us. I was to be her host. By the time the hour for the meeting had come, the city was drifted feet deep in a blizzard of snow. One could not get down the front steps, let alone reach a public meeting place. So we piled logs on a fire and talked, and the talk was

interesting. When the evening had come to its end, I apologized for having brought my guest all the way from New York merely to sit by the fire and waste time talking. Miss Kelly said, "Oh, don't think that for a moment. Nothing is more important than just this kind of talk. I never count any time lost that is spent this way."

Such speaking out is our surest defense against that weakest of vices, self-pity. The prophet Elijah ran off into the wilderness and there bitterly complained that he was the only religious man left in the world. God bade him put away his self-pity; there were still seven thousand others who shared his faith and his lot and who were, if he would only realize it, his comrades. But the solidarity of such a society rests upon the premise that they who fear the Lord shall speak often one to another.

There are, as a matter of fact, far more religious persons in the world than we commonly suppose. How often do we suddenly find from a stray remark which he lets drop that some man, to whom we have long looked up, is sustained and directed in life by religious convictions with which we had not yet associated him! What he has said has been said quite simply, and without affectation, as a natural comment on things; yet it lights up and explains his whole character.

It is a mistake for two men to room together through four years in college, and never to speak out—to say what they really think. It is little short of tragedy that a man and a woman and their children can live together in a home year after year, forfeiting by their shy silences the ability to speak out to one another. In the end they become so reticent and so self-conscious where religion is concerned that each lives in semi-ignorance of the inner truth of all the others. One remembers the cry of bitter self-reproach wrung from Carlyle, after his wife's death, as he was going over her intimate papers, "If I had only known! If I had only known!"

And thus, finally, we owe it to the whole Christian cause today to speak out. The gospel of Antichrist is being shouted from the housetops of many a European capital, blared across wide countries by loud-speakers. The very blatancy of the transaction is enough to satisfy us that God is not in that wind, and earthquake, and fire; it is, rather, a brief for "the still, small voice." Nevertheless, inwardness and quietism are not the whole answer to these tirades. A voice out of the whirlwind commanded Job not to keep quiet any longer—for that was his inclination—but to gird up his loins and give answer, to speak out.

The voice of the Christian Church is today divided, therefore, muted or equivocal. We cannot all say the same thing in the same way. Perhaps we ought not to expect to. Yet we should not allow our varying creeds to cancel one another out because of the confusion of tongues in the Babel of our denominationalism. Something like church unity has seemed hitherto to be a luxury. Now it is becoming a moral necessity. We are, as members of differing churches, tolerant each of the other's faith, loath to criticize it, and correspondingly reluctant to lay our own faith open to unsympathetic criticism. Hence the policy of live-and-let-live upon which we have tacitly agreed. But this is weak strategy and a poor weapon with which to meet the outspoken enemies of religion in modern times. We cannot afford to give indefinitely the "uncertain sound" of a divided faith.

You, therefore, to whatever church you may belong, owe it to the total cause of our common religion to speak out with new courage and candor to your fellow Christian in some church other than your own. It is no longer enough to hear the echo of your own voice returned to you as the approving "Amen" of your fellow denominationalists. You should speak across the fence tops and through the gaps in the wall; for something there is in us, a catholic charity, "which does not love a wall." It will be only by

such simple, natural, candid speaking back and forth that we shall find and fashion a Holy Church Universal whose witness to its faith will be a match for the single-minded, blatant irreligion of un-Christian creeds and policies.

In a well-known writing of the scribal period of later Judaism we find Rabbi Hanina ben Teradim saying:

When two sit and there are not between them the words of Torah (the Law), lo, this is the seat of the scornful, as it is said, "Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." But when two sit and there are between them words of Torah, the Shechinah (the glory of the presence of God) rests between them, as it is said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one with another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."

The Rabbi had not missed the point of the book of Malachi.

X. *He Knows*



*Jesus . . . needed not that any should testify of man:
for he knew what was in man.*

—JOHN 2:25



THOSE who do not know much about the Christian religion are often puzzled that it lasts on so stubbornly and so long. They wonder why it did not die out centuries ago.

Such persons have two or three stock theories to explain the survival of Christianity. Perhaps the most familiar is that proposed by the social revolutionaries: religion is the opiate of the people. It is something that is given to underprivileged classes to keep them content with their unjust and unhappy lot. Once they contract this pleasant drug habit they find it hard to break. Thus there is little doubt that the slave-owners in the Old South used religion in this way as a buttress for slavery. Harriet Martineau toured the cotton States in the 1830's and commented on the fact that the New Orleans papers often unashamedly advertised sales of "pious negroes" as an especially good bargain. Pious slaves made little trouble over their earthly lot because they were content with the hope of heaven. Similar charges, duly documented, have more than once been made against unscrupulous employers of labor in the North. This dogma of the opiate is, at best, a half-truth about the survival of

religion. If you are reading in these days the pronouncements of pastors, priests and bishops in the occupied countries of Europe, you will hardly call their words an opiate.

A second fashionable theory, often held by intellectuals, says that religion has become the monopoly of a professional class, a kind of profitable racket which is kept alive by a conspiracy of the clergy. Any such account of the matter may be a compliment to the ministers of religion, but it is one which they neither acknowledge nor deserve. It is as if you had gone to Professor Kittredge and accused him of keeping Shakespeare alive. He would most certainly have replied that, on the contrary, it was Shakespeare who had kept him alive.

A third suggestion is met inside the religious circle. So Harnack asks, in his *History of Dogma*, what the forces were that finally determined the settled forms of faith and practice in the early church. He lists a number of factors and then concludes with the final phrase, "the sanctifying power of blind custom." His words are not necessarily a condemnation of religion. All life is set up and kept going by customs. Were it not so, we should never get anything done. Habit is mainly a labor-saving device and as such is a virtue rather than a vice. Religion is, of course, particularly liable to form habits and patterns, and there is no other area of life where the power of custom is as strong. This is so precisely because religion's proper concerns are so few and so elemental. But there is no guarantee of immortality granted to even the oldest and most ingrained of our habits. If they finally lose their relation to life, there comes a moment when they go to pieces as finally and completely as did the deacon's famous "one hoss shay." No human concern can be permanently trusted merely to the sanctifying power of blind custom, not even the most sacred concern. These several accounts of the matter are interesting sidelights on the stubborn persistence of religion in general and

Christianity in particular, but they do not get at the heart of the matter.

Let us put the problem in the terms at which we hinted a moment ago, the survival of Shakespeare. Why is it that Maurice Evans can pack the house for a whole long season with a revival of *Richard the Second*? Evans is an intelligent actor, clever and well mannered for that particular part, but he is not a great actor. We say that he revives Shakespeare. That is too generous a term. Shakespeare has never languished and died. Matthew Arnold knew why Shakespeare lives on:

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still. . . .
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honor'd, self-secure.

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

You have here an intimation of the right answer to the question we have been asking. For what Arnold says about Shakespeare, John says of Jesus, "He needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."

There is little doubt that if historical critics should perform a major operation on the Christian religion, remove the figure of Jesus from the realms of both history and piety, take him out of the New Testament altogether, and take him out of the hymns and prayers, Christianity would not last long. The operation would be fatal. For Jesus is still not merely the center of interest; he is the principle of vitality in the religion which bears his name. None of us ever fully understand him, but as we turn the pages of the Gospels we have the strange feeling that we are in the presence of someone who understands us. The hold of such a

person over us is strange and strong. To be known is in some ways a deeper experience than to know.

Now there is nothing especially mystical or theological about this experience. It is one which we constantly have in relation to that world of friends whom we know only "in the spirit," through their writings or their art. Tennyson says of all such that they are "loved deeper, darklier understood." Thus for me, this friend was for a time Carlyle, then Browning, then Phillips Brooks, and in due time Father Tyrrell. Were we to meet one of these friends of our inner world, we should not have to introduce ourselves and start the painful business of trying to explain ourselves. They know us; they would understand from the first. So it is that with perfect propriety we think of Jesus as one "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."

There are two quite distinct kinds of insight implied in the words of the text, "He knew what was in man." He knew the worst, and it is of such sober knowledge that the Gospel is in this instance speaking.

The poet Wordsworth tells us that as a young man he looked at the shield of human life on its golden side. It was only when he found that this was not the whole truth that he turned the shield around and looked, in his later years, upon its darker side. Most of us have grown up in a religious and political tradition which has encouraged us to look solely and steadily at the golden side of the shield of life. We have tended to overlook and to "wink at" its reverse.

In this sense of the word we can never identify Jesus with orthodox liberalism. He saw only too clearly the sombre side of life which later prompted Huxley's belief in "Satan, the prince of this world." This sterner side of the character of Jesus is one which we have too much neglected. For there is in the character of Jesus himself a strain of

something which can be described only as "austerity." "Thou art an austere man." The woes he pronounced upon the cities of Galilee are unqualified. His pitiless description of the place of outer darkness is grim. Nor is there any incompetent innocence in his judgments of individuals. He was in all personal dealings as harmless as the dove, but he did not fail to be as wise as the serpent. He was not deceived by the outward appearance; no one ever fooled him or made a fool of him. Again and again the words ring through the Gospels, "He knew." Like Augustine, quoting the classical author, he counted nothing human foreign to himself. He had been given by nature that sure insight into the lives of men which is won by others only after long years of discipline. A senior officer in an army, a wise country doctor, a college dean—finally, they come to know.

The Gospels, therefore, are not a liberal manifesto in the romantic sense of that word. There is in them far too much of the sombre side of the shield of life to identify them with romanticism. The people of Nazareth, the townsfolk in Capernaum, his own disciples quarrelling about rank and promotion, Judas who betrayed him and Peter who denied him, Herod and Pilate—he knew and needed not that any should tell him. Perhaps the word we should use here is "realism." That is our term for a dispassionate knowledge of facts. All this is implied and intended by the text.

It is precisely because he knew the worst that he was then able to go on and believe the best. The calling of the twelve seems to have been a most hit-and-miss affair. There was no gathering of recommendations and testimonials, no pondering of grades and degrees. He picked up his first disciples as he went along and chanced on them, some fishermen by the lake, a tax collector sitting in his booth. Chesterton says that in the method of the calling of the twelve we have all the warrant we need for the jury system. You should be able to trust any twelve men on whom you happen in the street.

If you cannot trust them, whom can you trust? Upon that fact, call it chance or certainty, the Christian Church was founded. There was in Jesus' realism no trace of cynicism. If he did not blink the truth of any given person, neither was he limited by the initial truth. He believed that he could make very much of unpromising human stuff. Like all the mystics he seems to have held that there is in every man the still unquenched spark of the divine.

Take a single classical instance, his relation to Peter. One cannot suppose, and the Gospels give us no reason for supposing, that Jesus did not realize from the first the sort of man Simon Peter was: impulsive, generous, over-confident, and therefore liable to the faults that lay so near his virtues. In the end Peter was guilty of one of the most tragic disloyalties the Bible knows. But though the denial came as a sorrow to his Master, it was no surprise. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee." Yet with that warning were coupled those other words of reassurance, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He was prepared, still, to build his Church on such foundation.

We read in the Epistle to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." There is no point at which those who are today trying to carry on our religion might aspire more soberly to some share of the mind of Christ. Plainly it has been the weakness of our tradition that we have not been realistic enough in our doctrine of man. With the best will in the world, "Munich," and all that the word has come to mean, was a mistaken vote of confidence in bad men, unwarranted by the fact. It is upon this stone of stumbling, ignorance of human nature or a sentimentalizing of it, that many a historic venture of would-be good will has come to grief.

Some of you will remember Thomas Mott Osborne and his Mutual Welfare Leagues in the state's prisons of New York. They were bold votes of confidence in unlikely men,

but they succeeded because the warden must have had some sure instinct as to his man. In want of such an instinct the plan goes awry. I met on a train in the west some years ago a minister who had been for years at the forefront of a movement in his state for general prison reform. A progressive governor, just come into office, had taken him at his word and challenged him to become warden of the largest of the prisons in the state. The minister had no option but to accept. Once installed, he proceeded at once to put Osborne's program into operation and placed his greatest trust in an old hardened criminal who, he hoped, might be for that institution what Canada Blackie had been for Auburn prison. This man betrayed his trust, let his warden down, and thus wrecked the whole scheme for a Welfare League. The warden was not only hurt; he was puzzled. Why had the plan worked in the one instance and not in the other? It was only when he sent for the man's medical history that he found the answer. There had been in the past a complete mental breakdown, leaving as its aftermath a permanent psychological liability. It had never been fair to ask the man to stand the strain which had been laid upon him. The warden had not realized this; he did not "know."

In due time we shall have to deal, we trust, with conquered nations and liberated peoples. We shall be faced with men who are, so far as one can see, mentally diseased and morally perverted, men who belong in an asylum rather than on a scaffold. We shall have to deal with other persons whose bodies have been permanently impaired by hunger and whose minds have been warped by fear. We shall have children starting life only half nourished and the old who will be very tired. Indiscriminate pity and sentimental charity will do little good. One is reminded of the tract distributor who is said to have wandered over the field of Gettysburg after the battle, distributing his wares without fear or favor, and who handed one poor

man whose legs had been broken by a shell a tract on the evils of dancing. Perhaps our religion could afford in those days to allow itself such ignorance, but those days ought now to be gone. Let us hope that when the day comes in which we shall begin the long, tedious task of reconstruction in Europe we shall be no strangers to the initial realism of the mind of Christ. For that task we must find and send wise helpers who will need not that any should tell of them of man because by instinct and fit training they will already know what is in man.

But it will be a sorry thing for our world if they bring only their initial realism. That is a grim picture which we had a generation ago of Clemenceau standing before his mirror, and saying to his reflected self, "Georges Clemenceau, thou believest in the Fourteen Points." We cannot afford such cynicism a second time. Therefore, healers and helpers of mankind, who have Christ's undefeated confidence in the possibilities of repentance and restoration, must be found for this ministry of reconciliation. In want of them and of their confidence the prospect for the future will be dark indeed.

The faith without the knowledge will not suffice, for faith which is cavalier in its neglect of fact is mired in sentimentalism. The knowledge without the faith will not be enough, for realism alone grows bitter and disillusioned. But the knowledge and the faith, which together were the mind of Christ, have in them that promise of the better world that eager hearts expect. Only those who have this dual mind will be fit to become the effectual helpers of mankind. Such persons will know, first, for worse and, finally, for better, what is in man.

XI. *The Testing Ground of Prayer*



If thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.

—ECCLUS. 2:1



TEMPTATION, of course, does not mean here enticement to evil, but temptation in the older sense of trial, proving, testing. Therefore, "If you come to God, you must expect to be tried and tested."

One of the most magnificent college chapels in America is that at Stanford University. The interior is entirely covered with gorgeous mosaics of Byzantine pattern. When the building was first put up, Senator Stanford's widow provided that in the vault of the ceiling at the central crossing where choir, nave and transepts meet, there should be reproduced a copy of a design which she had seen similarly placed in some Italian church—the all-seeing eye of God. Therefore, when the inner dome was done, a great, unblinking eye, done in plaster, gazed down upon you as soon as you entered the church and followed you about wherever you went.

The central area of the Stanford chapel came down in the earthquake of 1906, and the tower falling through the roof carried with it the all-seeing eye of God.

The chapel was in due time restored. Fresh mosaics were imported from Italy. The central tower however was not

rebuilt to its original height, therefore there was no high interior dome as there once had been. In want of this dome the locale and perhaps the architectural warrant for the all-seeing eye was wanting. In any case it was not reproduced on the lowered ceiling of the restored structure. The pious donor was dead. The symbol of her choosing had, of course, never appealed to some of her less pious beneficiaries, and apparently the community was content to live without it. The whole incident is an illustration of the way in which time dispenses with outworn symbols. Some accident or unsettlement of man's affairs dislodges them, and though their absence thereafter may be noted, their loss is not seriously felt.

We have here at Harvard as theologically austere a hymnal as is humanly possible. It can give little offense to even the most critical believer. Yet there is in our hymnal one stanza which, given its total setting, is rather surprising. It is from an old hymn written by Prudentius in the fourth century:

For all day long on heaven's high tower
There stands a sentinel, who spies
Our every action, hour by hour
From early dawn till daylight dies.

I often wonder how that stanza passed our theological censorship, for there can be very few of us who believe that there is any such sentinel or, indeed, any such high tower. We usually omit this stanza in an otherwise unimpeachable hymn!

And yet one is left a little uneasy about the whole matter. May it be that we are purchasing our moral holiday and our sense of complacency with counterfeit coinage. If we have gained some sense of moral ease, we have also lost something; we have lost a certain perspective, we have lost one of the touchstones of sincerity and honesty. If

you look over the classical prayers in any historic liturgy, you will be struck by the fact that some of them begin, "O Lord, thou knowest . . ." In our nonliturgical churches there is a reaction against this type of prayer. It is said that it is little short of impertinence to tell God things he already knows. True, this type of nonliturgical free prayer is apt to wander off into irrelevancies or to become bogged down in platitudes. I have been told that in the fall of 1914 a visiting preacher said in the course of his pastoral prayer in our own college chapel, "O Lord, thou knowest that there is a great war in Europe." A statement such as that may be slightly redundant. Nevertheless, we ought not to allow abuses of the pattern to blind us to its warrant and its uses. One of the writers of the New Testament says to those who are to receive and read his Epistle, "I have written unto you, because you know." The result was that he wrote a good letter about matters which were familiar both to writer and reader. So, likewise, a prayer which begins, "O Lord, thou knowest . . ." may go on to be a good prayer, not because it professes to tell God things which he does not know but rather because it says to him what both know together.

It is, on the whole well, no matter what the people at Stanford may have done about the restoration of their all-seeing eye of God, that we and they have not followed the lead of their change by deleting from our prayer books the lovely collect which begins, "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." It will be a bad day for religion if those words go the way of the mosaic, for they have in them an idea which is necessary both to the theory of religion and to the practice of prayer.

Many persons have difficulties and reservations about praying. They do not know whether prayer can affect the processes of nature, the course of history, the fortunes of

men. Even if it were proved that the man who prays has this power, many a sensitive soul would doubt whether he ought to exercise it. It is a risky thing to tamper with the constancy of nature, just as it is, in Browning's words, "an awkward thing to play with souls." When we try to manipulate the outer world by prayer, we are playing the role of the magician, and on the whole the history of religion seems to indicate that this is a role to be avoided.

Meanwhile, retaining our confidence that prayer is a genuine transaction and not a form of autosuggestion, its practice has certain intimate and interior values which we cannot deny. And it is of one or two such values that I am proposing to speak for the remainder of the hour.

When you pray, unless you are a wholly crude and callous person, you find out how sincere you are and how truthful you are. As conscientious men conceive of religion today, these two qualities, sincerity within and truthfulness without, are essential. In want of them there can be no religion worth the name.

The first benefit we get from prayer, then, is reassurance as to our own sincerity. Sincerity is the name we give to honesty in the inner life and in personal character. It is orderliness rather than chaos in our beliefs; and a working correspondence between our profession of faith and our moral practice. With a sincere man there is no flagrant discrepancy between what he says and what he does. When they were first building the big bridge across the St. Lawrence River just above Quebec, one whole outreaching arm of the cantilever construction fell into the river. Somewhere or other the plan for the bridge, or its construction, had been insincere.

We take it for granted that every one, ourselves included, is as a matter of course sincere. We forget how much insincerity we allow ourselves for the sake of the

social graces or the conventions. The real thing is very rare.

I hardly ever [says an English novelist] see a pure breed of either goat or sheep. I never see anybody who deserves to go straight to heaven or who deserves to go straight to hell. There is no such thing as a human being simply hypocritical or simply sincere.

Father George Tyrrell in a memorable letter to a friend picks up that judgment and carries it further.

As to the question, "Are we honest?" I reply "Indifferent honest." The honesty question always riles me. English John Bull speaks as though honesty were the simplest and most primitive of the virtues, and not the very last quintessence of a noble character. At least, let us confess that there are degrees of honesty as there are of reality. For the rest, it is enough if we try to be honest and purge out our dishonesties with all diligence. The best symptom of progress is a growing sense of one's manifold insincerities.

Father Tyrrell was what is called a "Modernist." In this matter he was rightly so called. For in our modern religious world, where our theological systems are in course of change, it is hard for most of us to draft any one statement of belief which we are prepared to call final and definitive. The 1808 Statutes of Andover Seminary included, as Article II, a Creed which should "forever remain entirely and identically the same, without the least alteration, or any addition, or diminution." The integrity of the Creed was to be safeguarded by a Visitorial system which should "continue, as the Sun and Moon, forever." From 1886 to 1892 Andover Seminary was in the highest courts of the Commonwealth, involved in costly litigation to prop up a Creed that was already unable to stand on its own premises. And with the third decade of the present

century the Seminary had to ask the courts to relieve it altogether of anything like literal subscription to its Creed, that its Faculty and students might live in the present rather than in the dead past. Experiences like that discourage us in times of radical change from trying to draw up creeds which shall remain entirely and identically the same, without addition or diminution, permanent as the Sun and Moon forever.

In want of any such static and final test for orthodoxy we tend to lay added stress upon sincerity as one of the primal religious virtues. An insincere minister is today a person who commands no confidence, whatever his superficial skills. He is sinning the sin for which there is no forgiveness. Insincerity in ourselves makes us uneasy, and we dare not trust our native self-assurance since we know the mystic is right when he says that "all deception becometh in self-deception." The wise man of Israel said, speaking for God, "Ye have not, as it were, forsaken me, but your own selves." Insincerity is just such a desertion of oneself, and our forsaken better self is a stern judge whom we may well dread. Hence, so long as prayer is a process which makes us, in Father Tyrrell's words, aware of a growing sense of our manifold insincerities and breeds within us a desire to purge them out with all diligence, it is a discipline we must value, and in it we must persist. When we come to the Lord in prayer, we must prepare ourselves for trial and proving in this primal matter. There is no other testing ground for our sincerity that can serve us as truly and as well.

Then there is the other theory of truth, that it is the correspondence of our ideas with the realities of the world around us. Men were utterly sincere in believing for centuries that this earth was the center of the universe, but their belief was not truthful. Essential as sincerity may be to religion, it is not of itself the whole truth. Religion

must slowly and patiently seek and find the facts as they are. The madhouses of our world are filled with tragically sincere religious fanatics. Their combination of passionate sincerity with pathetic untruthfulness makes them a problem to themselves and a peril to society. The pages of history are blotted with black records of the disservice to religion done by deluded men. For this reason no religion, not even modernism and liberalism at their best, can ever safely restrict the measure of religious truth to sincerity alone.

It is at this point that we may expect science to help religion. In his rectorial address at the University of Aberdeen, Thomas Huxley said that the air which a student breathes "should be surcharged with a passion for veracity." That passion for veracity implies an initial integrity of mind and of mental processes, but it goes farther than that. In a memorable letter to Charles Kingsley, Huxley says:

Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian doctrine of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all risks to do this.

The perils to which men are laid open, particularly in religion, by a deluded sincerity are averted only by a dispassionate love of outward reality.

It may not always be easy to achieve Huxley's attitude even in the presence of the order of nature, since even there our preconceptions and prejudices are stubborn. But it is much harder to win this temper when we are dealing with human facts as we meet them in history and in contemporary society. How long will it be before a dispassionate life of Woodrow Wilson can be written? That ground is

like new lava; it is still too hot to walk on. So it is with the issues of world wars! Old enmities, inherited hatreds, sentimental loyalties, false hopes and unworthy fears all jostle the mind when we face races, nations and cultures other than our own. Even the best of us is bogged down in a mire of ignorance and indefensible dishonesties from which we cannot or do not wish to escape. He is a very rare man who can get himself out of that mental mire to master something like a true knowledge of the facts as they are and then to accept them. This is a task at once of hard mental training and of moral self-discipline.

A distinguished American said the other day that the only important technique which the first World War had perfected and passed on was that of propaganda, the elaboration of a political apparatus for telling half-truths in such a manner that they misrepresent the whole truth. The result is widespread skepticism as to the reliability of far too many public pronouncements. We had staying with us here at Harvard not long ago a distinguished classical scholar from the University of Lund in Sweden. One morning I handed him, as my guest, the morning paper. He glanced at the headlines on the first page and threw the paper aside in despair and disgust, saying, "In generations to come our time will be known as 'The Age of Lies.'" What a crown to wear before posterity!

The ancient Hebrew prophet said, "My people are destroyed for want of knowledge." It is not a want of fanatical sincerity that has led the Mad Mullahs of our time to destroy so much of our civilization; it is a want of knowledge, a knowledge of history, of human nature, of themselves and their fellow men, and in the end, want of a knowledge of God.

Prayer is not of itself a device for getting such knowledge apart from the patient disciplines of the mind. But as it is in the first instance a discipline in sincerity, so it is

also a discipline in open-mindedness. For two questions are always at stake here. Are we willing to know the truth? It may be unwelcome and hard to accept. And then, are we willing to pay in honest brain work the cost that such knowledge always asks? It is to these questions that prayer must finally address itself. And it is of these questions that the wise man said truly, "If thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation," and that means for the stern salutary experience of trial in truthfulness.

XII. *Seeing the Invisible*



He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

—HEB. 11:27



THE eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews begins, as you remember, with the famous and familiar words, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Then follows the roster of Old Testament heroes of the faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and all those others of whom time failed to tell.

Reading the chapter is like visiting some great memorial room. Tablets on the walls bear historic names. And space is left for names to come, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Indeed, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews will remain unfinished until history itself is over and done.

Meanwhile, the story of the lives of these men of faith is sober reading. They were tortured and scourged, imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, driven into dens and caves of the wilderness. They had no abiding city in their own time and place; they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And if you ask, as you naturally would ask, how men stand that sort of thing, the writer has already given you the answer, "They endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

We come on Palm Sunday to the beginning of another Christian Holy Week. The story of the next few days in the year is familiar to all who know anything about the Christian religion. We moderns do not like uncertainties. But the record which leads up to Good Friday is very sure. We stand that day upon what is the primeval granite of historic fact. Elsewhere in the Gospels the play of devout imagination and the beginnings of theology have already begun to retouch the original story. So much is this true in the Gospels, and so much more fully did it become true in later Christian art and thought, that it has been the fashion in some quarters to suggest that there is nothing in the original record of which we can be certain. Even the first great creed of the Church, the Apostles' Creed, it is said, asks too much of us in the way of credulity. But as some one has put it, "Of all the statements in the creed, which were in their turn taken from the Bible, there is one about which there is no doubt, of that we can be quite certain. The statement is, 'Suffered under Pontius Pilate.'"

Two or three things may be said of the story of Holy Week. From first to last it is wholly free of anything like overstatement, or rhetoric, or sentimentalism. Middleton Murry in his book on English style speaks about the need of sweating the fat off English prose. Merely as a matter of style there is not an ounce of verbal overweight in the Gospel record of Holy Week. It is a lean and hurrying English. Every observance of the Lord's Supper presupposes that record, and it is of the Roman Mass that Cardinal Newman once said, "Its words hurry as if impatient to fulfill their mission. Quickly they go. The whole is quick. As when it was first said in the beginning, 'What thou doest, do quickly.'"

Perhaps the next thing to be said of the story of Holy Week is that it has an innate power to renew itself in our experience. If you read it and think of it as something quite

apart from yourself, its form and substance are so classic that you never tire of it. Even if you only study it from the outside, you see in it every time you return to it something you had never noticed before. In an area such as this one ought to outgrow the mood of a cheerful young college girl whom I once asked, on a campus, "Are you going to hear Paderewski tonight?" "Oh, no!" she said, "I don't have to. I heard him last year." You cannot outgrow any real classic; you can only patiently grow up to it. So it is with the Passion story.

And then one must say that in times like this, when there is tribulation abroad in the world and when the fact is of such dimensions that it cannot be ignored or denied, the story of Holy Week no longer seems what it once may have seemed, an unwelcome intruder into otherwise happy lives, but becomes a fit companion for our troubled days.

She was singing [says the novelist] the aria from the *Messiah*, "He was despised and rejected of men." That aria [the writer goes on] wound itself into the very centre of my existence. The song is potent because, with the utmost musical tenderness and strength, it reveals the secret of the influence of the story of Jesus. Nobody would be bold enough to cry, "That too is my case." And yet the humblest soul has a right to the consolation that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Beyond the Garden of Gethsemane human experience cannot go.

We are living at a time when the story of the Passion of Jesus is not an exception to the common human lot, not an irritating question mark set against our pleasures. We do not have to make a definite act of imagination to understand the story. We have only to read any honest transcript of the tragedies of our time, to think of those whom we know and love who are already in, or are facing, real perils; then we add to these our own store of lesser

troubles, and the story of the Passion of Christ becomes again the classical statement of one whole side of human experience.

Now how do men put through such experiences in such times? How do they endure? That the problem of endurance is a real one, there is today no doubt. In the barest material sense of the word we are engaged with our enemy in what is ultimately an endurance test. Whose food and oil and rubber and copper and man-power will last longest? What is true of material things is even more true of immaterial things, what we call "morale." What expectation of life have our ideals and loyalties against those of the enemy? What is true of whole societies is also true of us one by one. You are more than usually unimaginative or self-confident if you have not found yourself saying in certain moments of uncertainty, "I wonder how I am going to endure what may still be in store for me."

Well, the world has devised three or four classical answers to that question.

The first is this—just to try to outlive all one's loves and cares and tasks. Such is the note which is struck in so many of the world's great tragedies. You get it in Hecuba's speeches in the *Trojan Women*. You get it in *King Lear*. You get it in Synge's plays. So Deirdre says, "I have put off sorrow like a shoe that is muddy and worn out." So the old mother Maurya in *Riders to the Sea* says of her sons, the last of whom has just been lost, "They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. It's a great rest I'll have now. And it's time, surely." There are hundreds of thousands of persons in our world today who have come to the point when they can say just that. There is nothing more that the world can do to them. The fact that we have not yet come to any such point should not make us insensitive to the majesty and serenity of that kind of endurance.

The next method of enduring is more sophisticated but perhaps not less successful, namely, that which is known as "Stoicism." It is the ability and the manner of the intellectual aristocrat who looks trouble in the face and simply stares it out of countenance. It was first called "Apatheia." Our word "apathy" is not an exact translation. It means not indifference but rather dispassionateness—what we best know today as the detached fair-mindedness of science addressed to the issues of personal life. You will find this manner of endurance celebrated in the *Golden Book of the Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

Does any uncommon accident befall me? I acquiesce in it, as being the appointment of the gods. For nothing can happen to any man, but such accidents as are common to him in Nature. No evil can be intolerable which is the common lot of our being. As Nature herself seems to view with indifference prosperity and adversity, so he who would follow Nature as his guide ought to do the same. He will imitate Nature in her indifference with regard to pleasure or pain, life or death.

A third way of enduring is that of the runaway. Some of the world's great religions have encouraged in man his natural instinct to flee from an intolerable world. None of the world's religions has ever quite been able to suppress this instinct. Such flight is something more than an animal attempt to preserve the life of the body. It is a matter of preserving one's sanity, one's self-respect, and above all, one's moral integrity. There would seem to be some situations that can be handled only in this way. Just as worldly warfare knows what is called a strategic retreat, so spiritual warfare recognizes the validity of a similar strategy. There are occasions when the forces of evil are so many and so massed that it seems little short of spiritual suicide to try to stand up against them. Henry Thoreau never gave such

point to his anti-slavery sentiments as on the day when, to all intents and purposes, in refusing to pay his tax at the Concord Town Hall, he resigned from the United States.

As for the wider world, there seem to be moments when a man is not called upon to risk losing his mind or his sense of elemental decencies, or to compromise his conscience by staying on hand any longer. "Depart ye, depart ye, come ye out from thence. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." In the moment when you cannot save the world, the question then arises: can you save yourself, and may this not be your duty? Even so, the most you can hope for is to be saved as by fire and a narrow margin out of a great tribulation. Hence the powerful appeal of the desert, of the edge of Walden Pond, of the little book in the little corner, and of all ivory towers whatsoever. Again, you are more than commonly self-sufficient and self-secure if you have not faced the chance that this may be your best way of enduring what the times impose upon you. Even Jesus himself once said, "When they persecute you in one city, flee to another." I do not know what those words were intended to mean. Perhaps Jesus was asking less of his disciples than he asked of himself, knowing that they were not as strong as he was. Perhaps he would allow us this loophole of escape, although he did not seek it himself. He set his face steadily to go to Jerusalem and did not look for or ask for any other city whither he might flee.

In the *Apocryphal Acts of Peter* there is the lovely legend which has given us the phrase, "Quo Vadis, Domine." It is legend, not history, but it is faultlessly faithful to the spirit and example of Jesus. In a time of persecution, so runs the story, Peter was given a chance to get out of Rome and well away.

Marcellus and the rest of the brethren besought him to depart. But Peter said unto them, "Shall we be runaways,

brethren?" And they said to him, "Nay, but that thou mayest yet be able to serve the Lord." And he obeyed the brethren's voice, and went forth alone. And as he went forth [it was along the Appian Way] he saw the Lord entering into Rome. And when he saw him, he said, "Quo Vadis, Domine,—Lord, whither goest thou," And the Lord said to him, "I am going into Rome to be crucified." And Peter said unto him, "Lord, art thou being crucified again?" He said unto him, "Yea, Peter, I am being crucified again." And Peter came to himself: and having beheld the Lord ascending up into heaven, he returned to Rome.

It was in the spirit of this lovely legend that George Tyrrell once said that whenever he was tempted to give up what seemed the futile spiritual struggle he had a vision of "that strange man hanging on his cross," and that this vision turned him back again.

This mood or motive is not any desire to bring upon oneself gratuitous pain. It is not a matter of an unhealthy mind and heart. It is, to use a word of Paul, a matter of entering into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, the world's sufferings. So far as I can make out, the strongest motive prompting and reconciling young men today to the disciplines and risks of war is an unwillingness to avoid a hard experience through which their fellows are to go and a determination to share that experience, to be part of the whole stern life of their time.

Well, in another way, that is the truth of Peter's going back into Rome, of Tyrrell's turning back to his task. Late in his life John Woolman made this entry in his *Journal*. He was talking about slavery, though he did not name its name.

In a time of sickness a little upward of two and a half years ago, I was brought so near the gates of death that I

forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour, between the South and East, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed with them, and henceforth might not consider myself a distinct or separate being.

To be a Christian today is to refuse to be a separate and distinct being apart from the vast somber mass of human lives "in as great misery as they can be in and live." This is primarily a matter of what goes on in one's mind and heart.

The mode and manner of our endurance are hinted at in such tales and words. If you ask how it was that the Captain of our salvation, who was made in all things like unto his brethren, endured what life and the world brought to him, it is no irreverence to apply to him the words which in the text were applied to one of the earlier heroes of the faith: "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

You may be able to endure your life by outlasting and outliving its troubles. You may be able to endure your troubles by a certain patrician contempt for them. You may play the Roman Stoic, or the sentinel at Pompeii, or the French aristocrat in the Reign of Terror. You may be able to escape from a world that you cannot hope to save from itself, and to endure thereafter in caves and dens of the earth, in sheltered libraries, and research laboratories, in the shut-in circle of your home and your harmless pleasures. If you can endure life from now on only in an ivory tower, you can find one without much trouble. They are all around you, forever inviting and sometimes almost imperious in their seductiveness.

But none of these methods of solving the problem of endurance can for a moment match that of any one of those old heroes of the faith named and numbered in the Epistle,

or of Jesus himself, of whom we can only say, "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." When it came to the last, Jesus, according to the narrative in John's Gospel, could only say, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

On the twenty-second of May in the year of our Lord 1498, they took Savonarola out into the public square in Florence to end the story. The Bishop of Vasona stripped him of his clerical dress, degraded him from office, and expelled him from the Church. But instead of repeating the usual form, "I separate thee from the Church Militant," he said, "I separate thee from the Church Triumphant"; and Savonarola replied, quietly, but loud enough to be heard by those standing hard by, "From the Church Militant, but not from the Church Triumphant; that thou canst not do." Beyond moments and words like that human experience cannot go. Few of us have come anywhere near any such experience. It is presumptuous for us to claim anything like companionship with such Passions—whether outside the city of Jerusalem or inside the city of Florence.

The keeping of Holy Week, at a time like this, confronts us with the question whether there is in our minds and hearts something of which we can with good confidence say, "This the world cannot take away from me, because the world did not give it to me. This came to me from God. Even here and now it belongs to things that are unseen and eternal." If this be so, and it is to the asking and answering of such a question that Holy Week summons us, then we can look forward with the assurance that not only shall we be able somehow to last it all out, to survive, but more than that "to endure, as seeing him who is invisible."

XIII. *The Unplanned Life*



But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

—MATT. 10:19, 20



FOR a century scholars have been trying to recover the Jesus of history. Of this whole long endeavor Schweitzer says:

The critical study of the life of Jesus has been for theology a school of honesty. The world had never seen before and will never see again a struggle for truth so full of pain and renunciation as that of which the lives of Jesus of the last hundred years contain the cryptic record.

We might have hoped that after so much painstaking inquiry and so much suffering for honesty's sake a figure would have emerged upon which all truth-seekers could have agreed. That, strangely, has not been the case. Apparently the nature of the sources is such that they do not yield to inquirers a uniform result.

Such is the character of the problem [Schweitzer goes on to say] that historical experiment must here take the place of historical research. . . . There is no historical task which so

reveals a man's true self as the writing of a life of Jesus. . . . Each individual creates him in accordance with his own character.

On second thought we may conclude that it is well that this is so, for it leaves our discipleship to Jesus in the area of faith where it belongs rather than in the area of impersonal consent to an indubitable scientific fact.

Meanwhile, the Christ of the creeds is an even more composite or diversified figure than the Jesus of history. None of our modern categories wholly exhaust him or explain him. We have referred the Christ of the creeds back to the historical original, and have at least satisfied ourselves that this Jesus was not a twentieth-century American Protestant, born long before his time. Our familiar denominational terms do not account for him—Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational, Methodist, Unitarian. Nor does he fit better into our more familiar economic and political patterns. We cannot with any assurance finally classify him as a capitalist or a socialist or a communist. We still jostle each other theologically in the attempt to capture him, but now, as then, "He, passing through their midst, went on his way."

The study of the life of Jesus is, therefore, in some measure a process of self-criticism and self-correction. As honesty compels us to draw the lines of his character differently than we may have drawn them in the past, drawing them, we hope, nearer to the truth, so in that very process we modify our own religious ideas.

Five hundred years before Christ a Greek thinker said, "Mortals fancy gods are born and wear clothes and have voice and form like themselves. Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed. Thracians give theirs blue eyes and red hair." The history of religion is very largely the record of man's attempt to correct primitive ideas of God.

Until we become aware of the incongruity and improbability implied in so doing, we think of God as we first tend to think of Jesus, in the terms of our own immediate experience. God concedes this human trait, "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself." But that initial concession is eventually corrected by the sober warning, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." By that warning God saves us from ourselves, from the ignorance, the prejudices, the limitations of a single finite human experience.

At the time when General Booth had finally succeeded in getting the Salvation Army well launched in England, most respectable people deplored it. Yet there was one Anglican clergyman who said, "I don't like it at all; but to tell you the truth, I'm afraid Almighty God does." That is the remark of a man who religiously had begun to grow up, who had put away the childish idea that what he liked God also must like as a matter of course.

The truth is that Jesus as a revealer of God serves us better by his differences from us than by his likeness to us. The likenesses may gratify our pride; the unlikenesses breed in us that first and last of all the religious virtues, humility. The Christian ought to say of Christ what Elizabeth Barrett said to Robert Browning, "Unlike are we, O princely heart, unlike."

I have lingered thus long on these matters and on the principle discovered in them for the sake of coming on now to one of the most striking points of difference between Jesus and ourselves. A discriminating modern scholar has called attention to this difference. If there is one trait, he says, which is characteristic of the modern mind, it is the habit of making plans, plans in advance. We have planned curricula, planned budgets, planned economies—

five-year plans, ten-year plans. Surely it is the height of folly to stumble unprepared into an unplanned future. And we may fairly say that we are not without biblical warrant for life so conceived and conducted. The first verse of the Gospel of John has been quite shrewdly translated, "In the beginning was a Plan."

But [says our commentator] this habit of making plans is more modern than we realize. My impression is that Jesus was largely casual. He reacted to situations as they arose, but he probably never had a program or a plan. . . . The religious man leaves planning to God. Submission to the will of God does indeed give life a kind of unity, yet it lacks all that creative planning, intelligent selection, singleness of purpose and the like that we usually mean in our efforts to preach the integration of life. There is nothing irreverent or improbable in such a view of Jesus. Modern purposiveness has no guarantee of divinity about it, though we naturally attribute it to Jesus, making him in our own image.

These words will come to you with something of a shock as they came to me when I first read them. You will not be surprised to know that their author is a Quaker. I sought him out and asked him if he actually meant what he had said. "Yes," he answered, "I really don't think that Jesus ever made any plans. I think he merely did what he wanted to do." Yet this judgment is not as radical as it may seem. Have we not all hoped that we might some day be spiritually and morally fit to venture forth with only those six simple words of Augustine as our guide for living, "Love, and do what you like." May that have been the truth of Jesus? His love was so perfect that it cast out fear and care. At each parting of the ways, where a choice had to be made, he could trust his love of God and man to lead him aright.

If one rereads the story of the life of Jesus with this

thought in mind, there is more warrant for it than we should have supposed. The only possible exception would be the conduct, and thus the record, of his life during Holy Week. One gets the strong suggestion there of formal acts done in accordance with a pattern. But this pattern was not of Jesus' making, nor was it his prevision of the fact and advance provision for the fact. The pattern and the plan had long been maturing in prophetic thought as the messianic destiny. God's plan for his people, as described in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, remained thereafter a profound religious insight which would not be ignored. Apparently Jesus concluded that by identifying himself with that plan he could best make his meaning clear, since all words remain half-truths until they are translated into acts. "This that is written must yet be accomplished in me." The last days were apparently the only planned days in the life of Jesus; yet, though he accepted their plan freely and fully, they were not of his own planning.

Now the unplanned life is not a bland confidence that somehow things will always come out right in the end. Nor is there, so far as one can see, any religious impropriety in planning, let us say, a college course and professional study thereafter. Nor is there anything wrong in trying to so order our working life that we can stay out of the workhouse and off public charity in our old age, though no one can guarantee that conditions will remain stable enough to redeem even the best laid of such plans. And it is probably unfortunate that the King James Bible makes Jesus responsible for the injunction, "Take no thought for the morrow." Improvidence is not necessarily a Christian virtue. The right rendering is, of course, "Be not anxious for the morrow," a difficult but nevertheless a different thing.

No, the unplanned life and the unpremeditated act have to do with a wholly different type of situation, the control

and conduct of life in a time of crisis. You must, for example, have found yourself wondering at times when driving a car very fast on some level road or going too rapidly down a long hill what you would do if a tire blew out or the brakes failed to hold. It is interesting, indeed a little disquieting, to think about a question like that in advance. But it is doubtful whether the question can ever be answered in advance. For if the emergency should suddenly occur, the conditions would not be precisely those which you had tried to foresee. The only thing one can do at a moment like that is to trust one's whole history and experience as the driver of a car, to fall back upon one's second nature.

It is said that this type of problem weighs heaviest among all modern men upon the aviator. Always at the back of his mind is an awareness that his motors may fail. But the aviators say that there is no advance answer to their perpetual problem, because no one can guarantee the nature of the precise terrain over which the plane may stall. The most and the best that a man can do when the time comes is to trust his knowledge of the air, of his machine, and of himself.

There is a fine brief for unplanned conduct in the little volume of Thoreau's, compiled from his *Journals*, known as "The Maine Woods." He is describing a trip which he once took with an Indian guide down the Alleghash. Again and again they came to rapids in the river, and the guide would put his passenger ashore saying, "You got to walk, ver' strong water." "Then," says Thoreau, "the Indian would step into the canoe, take up his paddle, and with an air of mystery start off, looking far downstream and keeping his own counsel, as if absorbing all the intelligence of stream and forest into himself." The Indian certainly could not have told you in advance his plan for shooting the rapids. He probably could not have told you, when

it was over, how he had done it. But, as Thoreau says, he drew upon the intelligence of the stream itself and upon a whole lifetime spent in navigating strong waters.

Unplanned acts of this nature are on the whole our most important and decisive acts. By them our characters are made and unmade, our lives saved or lost. In making our choices at such times we draw not upon surface rationalizings but upon our whole personal history and total experience of life. President Lowell put to me one day a problem with which he was confronted and asked me what I thought of it. I hesitated before replying. He said, "Don't stop to think. Don't ask me for a day to go away and think it over. I can think of all the pros and cons which will occur to you if you take time to reflect. What I want to know is how this strikes you here and now, and at once. What I want is your instant reaction to it. That will be what you, as a whole man, think of it." It was apparently his custom to seek and to trust such judgments, believing them to be more nearly true and right than opinions arrived at after long consideration.

It is within this area, where advance planning will always fail us for the simple reason that we cannot ever fully anticipate or accurately foresee the event, that we have to fall back upon this other and deeper principle and method of choice. There come to us sudden temptations which we should never have thought possible and for which we have made no provision. There come pains and sorrows which, with the best will in the world, we can never feel in advance, even though we may have vaguely conceded them as human liabilities. There come unexpected opportunities, open doors which we had never for a moment envisaged. Can we pass through them? These happenings, when they come, have a strange matter-of-fact quality, unlike anything with which imagination had been able to invest them beforehand, even if we had thought

of them as eventualities. The casual nature of all the major happenings in personal experience, their hard, intense actuality as birth and marriage and death come along in every home—all this is something for which we cannot make plans. Such plans as we may have tried to make are found in the event so utterly unlike the simple, imperious reality.

It is, then, in these areas and at this deeper level that we are compelled to concede the validity of the unplanned life. Confronted with such an occasion you cannot take time off to search the scriptures diligently for guidance; you have to trust as much of the Bible as you know by heart. Faced with necessity of instant choice and action you cannot go all over the Gospels again to find there some passkey to the riddle, "What would Jesus do?" You can only trust as much of the mind of Christ as you have already made your second mental nature and your daily moral habit. You must fall back upon your whole history as a Christian.

Leo Tolstoi tried to reduce the teachings of Jesus to their irreducible minimum. He fastened finally upon five sayings which gave us, he thought, what is essential in that teaching. One of his five points was that stated in our text, "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak" in the day of crisis which may well be ahead of you. Tolstoi preferred perhaps the still simpler statement in the Sermon on the Mount, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself." These words he understood to mean, "Thou shalt not pledge away thy future. Thou shalt leave thyself free to meet and reckon with the event when it comes."

It is true that Tolstoi went on from this premise to find here warrant for his anarchistic theories of church and state. Thou shalt not pledge away thy future, he held, to any such society. And it is true that his reading of the Gospels may too easily be construed as an identification of

an unplanned life with an unprincipled life. Nevertheless, like our modern Quaker, he hit upon a much neglected and important trait in the character of Jesus and thus of all would-be Christian lives.

Our world has seen in the last twenty-five years a vast number of plans which have come to nothing. What is more serious, it has seen reams of pacts and pledges which again have turned out to be only "scraps of paper." Furthermore, it has seen thousands upon thousands of young people make plans and vows in behalf of those plans, which in the event they have been unable to redeem. They tell you now, and tell you very truly, that they did not realize what it would be like when it came—this world at war and its issues. We have as yet no way of estimating the hurt done to character by vows which have had to be repudiated. To put it on no higher ground, it is humiliating to have to admit in retrospect the inexpertness of one's earlier life.

It is, then, against the sheer waste of paper as blueprint plans which fail to fit the fact when it arrives and against the more grievous self-inflicted hurt of pledges made too easily, only in sober second thought to be renounced, that the doctrine of the unplanned life is proposed. This need not mean evading choice and action; it need not mean the lesser choice rather than the nobler choice; but it does mean wisdom in admitting that when it comes, the crisis will not be what we had expected and planned for. That crisis will have an imperative reality and immediacy of its own. To meet and match it one will have all of one's daily life as a Christian and as much of the mind of Christ as has become the habit of one's thought and action. Therein must always lie our greatest confidence for the unknown future, as it awaits us, one by one.

Jesus announced no novel or strange principle when he bade his disciples fortify themselves for their future prov-

ings by a holy indifference to plans made in advance and by confidence in "the Spirit of our Father, which speaketh in us." The guidance of that Spirit, just so far as we are truly Christian, will then tell us what we should say and do. But this was no new commandment. We read, in the story of the anointing of the first King of Israel, Samuel's wise words to Saul: "And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serves thee; for God is with thee." Unless this is so, and unless we really believe and trust that fact, all our planning is beside the mark and will come to nothing. The unplanned life is, then, a life which dares to believe that if we are truly religious, whenever and whatever the future event may be, "it shall be given us in that same hour what we shall speak."

XIV. *The Grace of Christ*



The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

—REV. 22:21



THE Christian Church began its life partly as a little army setting out to conquer a great world, and partly as a secret society trying to remain hidden in the world. Like all armies and secret societies it had its signs and passwords. Thus its drawing of the fish was scrawled all over the ancient world. But whatever the letter of their mutual greeting, the spirit of every greeting which one Christian gave to another was that of the text, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

These are the closing words of the Bible. Beyond them in the world of letters lie the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, who paved the way for the massive patristic literature of succeeding centuries. Leaving the Bible and passing over into this other world is a matter of exchanging a familiar for an unfamiliar scene.

Carl Sandburg says of Walt Whitman that Whitman seems always to be saying, "I am going away now; I must leave it to you." We get much the same suggestion from the writers of the New Testament. Its authors seldom stayed out their time. They seem to be saying, "It is expedient for you that I go away. . . . The time of my departure is at hand." Their valedictory and their farewell was their witness to the grace of the Lord Jesus.

The New Testament lends itself readily to that type of reflective religious thought which we know as theology, but it is not primarily a theological book. The New Testament is chiefly concerned with immediate religious experiences which antedate theology, though in due time they were to become the occasion for theology. It is a little hard to classify the word "grace." Is it a word which religion uses from the first, or is it a term which reflective thought has coined later?

Strangely, and for reasons which are not apparent, Jesus—if one may trust the record of his sayings in the Synoptic Gospels—did not habitually use many of the words which have become classic in the religion which bears his name. The most conspicuous instance of this fact is the prominence of the word "love" in later Christian writings and its almost total absence in the first three Gospels. Apparently it was not a word which Jesus habitually used.

So it is with this other word, "grace." Jesus never used it to describe his own characteristics or attitudes. Some suspect that had his immediate disciples used it of him, he would have repudiated it, much as he repudiated the ascription to him of a goodness which he identified with God alone. "Why do you call me gracious? There is only one who is gracious, God." It was other men, remembering him and trying to intimate to one another and to the world the quality they felt most strongly in him, who gave this word its currency. The word "grace" probably should be accepted as a theological term, but, as is the case with all the major terms in theology, a real experience lies behind it. What was that experience?

The idea implied by the word we are considering might best be put, in a first attempt to find its meaning, in a negative form. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews celebrates its heroes of the faith and then flings in that splendid tribute to them as being persons "of whom the world was not

worthy." We all know what those words mean. For example, not long after the United States had repudiated the League of Nations, I asked an English friend what he thought of Woodrow Wilson. He said, "I think that fifty years hence America will realize she did not deserve such a president." That verdict deals with issues which are still controversial and will not be universally accepted, but it is at least illustrative and suggestive. Most Americans, when they stand on the threshold of the Lincoln Memorial, have a sense of personal unworthiness. They know that the country did not then deserve so great a leader and deserves him only imperfectly even now.

This very language which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews used of the men of faith we find addressed to Jesus in the Gospels. "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." By way of the Vulgate, the Latin Bible, that confession has passed over into the historic liturgies of the Christian Church as the statement, *Non dignus sum*. The Roman centurion was not guilty of false modesty; he was stating what he felt to be the fact. Nor is the plain man down the centuries guilty of affectation and insincerity when he uses the historic words, "I am not worthy."

On the other hand, the spontaneous human cry, "What have I done to deserve all this?" is more often addressed to our misadventures than to our good fortune. We are familiar today with the problem of evil to the point of tedium. But we do well to remember that the sheer mass and magnitude of the evil now abroad in the world does not alter its quality. During the first World War Canon Streeter said that the mounting evil of those years presented no new problem, that the dark mystery in its totality was present wherever and whenever one schoolboy had been unjustly flogged. The only difference perhaps is the fact that the flogging of a schoolboy is known to only a few,

whereas there is not a man alive today who does not feel "the heavy and the weary weight" of the piled-up evils of our time.

The longer one lives the less one is inclined to propose too easy answers to this hard problem. To offer such answers to those who are suffering deeply is either an irrelevance or an insult. Phillips Brooks once said that if some man were to come to him saying that he would now read him the riddle of evil, he would close his ears with the offer. We shall do well to ponder those wise words.

There are, of course, two or three working solutions of the problem of evil, and from these each of us chooses that which best suits his temperament and his need. The difference between these solutions is mainly that between the contemplative and the active types of human nature. In general the greatest help which we get in the matter, particularly in the area of moral evil, comes from our reflection on all that is implied in the fact of human freedom. But even so, much mystery remains, and one cannot ever quite suppress the suspicion which haunted the mind of the ancient wise men of Israel, that "it had been better not to have given the earth to Adam; or else when it was given him to have restrained him from sinning."

Meanwhile in the presence of life's inevitable sorrows sympathy is more effectual than trite dogmas. One of the most beautiful letters of condolence ever written was that sent by Thomas Gray to a friend whose wife was dying:

If the worst be not yet past, you will neglect and pardon me; but if the last struggle be over, if the poor object of your long anxieties be no longer sensible to your kindness or to her own sufferings, allow me at least an idea (for what could I do, were I present, more than this?) to sit by you in silence and pity from my heart not her, who is at rest, but you, who lose her.

"Man's unconquerable mind"—to use Wordsworth's phrase—will never cease to grapple with the problem of evil. But we must reckon with the patent fact that the creature circumstance of any given individual cannot be equated with his character in the terms of reward or punishment. The web of life is intricate, and our temporal fortunes are involved in processes which are wider and longer than our own life. The Book of Job ended long ago the cheap and easy identification of character with circumstance. To the question proposed by the sufferer, "What have I done to deserve this?" the answer must often be, "Nothing; save that your suffering is the price you pay for your membership in the race." The ledgers of society over a long period of time should balance; the petty-cash book of private life can seldom be made to balance. The penalty for the sins of history and society often falls most heavily upon the guiltless. Many an innocent child and upright man or woman suffers unjustly. Whatever our solution of these injustices we should never lose our feeling for the magnitude and even the majesty of the problem of evil. The only thoughts that help us here must be "long, long thoughts."

But having said so much of darker implications of the question, "What have I done to deserve this?" we must in all fairness reverse the shield of life and look upon its brighter side. I know of no argument in defense of the thesis that life and the world are inherently and predominantly good, as forceful as our admission that it is evil which is felt to be the problem, not good. For if one abandons the confidence that God and the world and life are good and embarks upon an unashamedly nonmoral interpretation of things, then what we call goodness is as irrational as evil. There would seem to be no more reason why things should be good than that they should be bad. Therefore, when we are perplexed and oppressed by the dark riddle of evil, we shall do well to turn and ponder the mystery of goodness.

Our primal instincts and thrusts would all seem to be prompted by the need for self-preservation. But over against acts so inspired we have everywhere and always at hand a volume of unselfishness, rising constantly to the level of self-sacrifice, for which there is no natural or rational account. The headlines of the daily paper blare out on the front page their tales of murder, lust, theft, vanity, and falsehood. But hidden paragraphs on an inside page tell less sensational stories of an almost inscrutable goodness: a child giving his life to save a playmate, a sailor on a sinking ship handing his life preserver to some weaker companion. In the accepted give-and-take of everyday life there is a wealth of

little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.

No one of us has any right to trade upon this vast form of social credit; yet we are puzzled and hurt every time it fails us. One of the elder systems of theology describes this spiritual capital, built up by the generations, as a "treasury of merits." But what entitles us to draw upon this treasury? Why should there be this mysterious marginal goodness always at our disposal?

You remember the classical saying, "There but for the grace of God go I." The words are said to have been inspired by the sight of a criminal on his way to the scaffold. They have been credited to more than one author. That perhaps is as it should be, for they cannot be restricted to the instant thought of any one man; they are common property. The happy accident of birth in this land rather than in some other land has saved us in America from the naked misery and deadly peril into which so many of our contemporaries in Europe have been plunged. But no one of us would claim that his exemption from these distresses is a reward for his personal virtues, a vote of confidence in

his private character. A normal human experience may mean some hardship and suffering which as individuals we have not deserved; but it is just as true that this same experience will visit us with blessings which we have not earned.

Some of you will remember the story of Canada Blackie. He was a "lifer," a hardened and embittered man, serving his sentence in Auburn prison when Thomas Mott Osborne became warden. Osborne fastened on him as the test case, the prospective keystone, for his whole Mutual Welfare League, and his bold venture succeeded. The time came when Canada Blackie lay dying of tuberculosis in the warden's house, and he said that there were some men who had helped him, though they were not the preaching and praying kind. They had treated him better than he deserved with the result that they made him better than he had meant to be or naturally would have been. Thomas Mott Osborne mediated to Canada Blackie the mystery of an undeserved goodness, and for that mystery and that goodness we have but one adequate word, "grace."

In so far as the influence of Jesus has made men better than they might have been or planned to be, that effect has been wrought by their awareness that Jesus and all those who perpetuate his spirit treat the world better than it deserves. There is in our religion an unnecessary and uncalculating strain which refuses to ration goodness. There is a holy impatience with all prudential counsels which warn us not to try to be overwise or righteous overmuch. When we dole out our goodness in accordance with the world's deserts, we are unprofitable servants. This precept and practice were recorded plainly in the Gospels. The precept has been reaffirmed and the practice renewed century after century by those who have translated what the mystic calls the "unmercenary love of God" into uncalculating service of their fellows.

In a day when the problem of evil presses hard upon us we do well to turn for reassurance to the problem of good. And as we look forward to the restoration of the common decencies of commerce and comradeship between peoples, we must realize that unless our religion has outgrown the rule of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and is prepared to treat much of our world better than it deserves, it will have little to contribute to that future. We need even now to prepare ourselves by inward discipline to show forth not only with our lips but in our lives "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

XV. *Life Unashamed*



Let me never be ashamed.

—PSA. 31:1



AS YOU motor along our state roads in the springtime, you are very likely to come upon some bridge that has been washed out by a flood. Warning signs well back on the road tell you to slow down. Finally, you turn into a detour full of potholes, make your careful way across a rickety, temporary, wooden bridge, until you are back on the highway again and can pick up your speed once more.

This halting of your pace has a wholesome effect on the mind. It makes you realize how much of life you expect to be made smooth for you and how much you take for granted. You realize what you had forgotten, that there always are rough places in the world and that the business of making them plain is for society both a serious and a constant task.

So it is with every act of translation. The result is a smooth-flowing text which is deceptive. Getting across from an ancient culture and its language into our vernacular English is by no means an easy transition. Deliberate acts of imagination are constantly required, and sometimes direct mental communication is almost impossible. At such times we have to resort to a makeshift verbal bridge. It is with this thought in mind that I am asking you to think of a

few familiar words in our Bible, those at the beginning of the thirty-first Psalm, "Let me never be ashamed."

The idea is common in both Testaments. We meet it frequently, for example, in Paul, and later Epistles. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." "Whosoever believeth . . . shall not be ashamed." "If I have boasted anything . . . I am not ashamed." "I suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed." "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." "Study to show thyself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

Paul harps so constantly on the theme that we wonder what was in the back of his mind. It is said that he who talks much about a virtue is himself suspect. One sometimes feels, as I have suggested in an earlier sermon, that Paul occasionally had to whistle to keep his courage up. The word which he uses, however, carries with it primarily the idea of being socially out of bounds, of being "bad form." The connotation is dishonor, disgrace. The emotion which attends the idea is prompted by the awareness that you have done something which "isn't done."

In this sense, of course, Paul was bad form. No one knew it better than he. When he set out to Damascus, he was on an important official mission. Then suddenly he found that he had joined the queer people. He was under no delusion as to the social standing of his new companions. They were not in *Who's Who*, or the *Social Register*. "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble" were found in the little scattered churches he eventually founded. The Church had to wait until a later day before that was to be true of it. To the intellectuals of his time, the gentlemen of Greece and Rome, Christianity was foolishness. To his own people it was half treason, half heresy.

Paul, being no stranger to the niceties of life, must often have felt much as you and I would feel if we were to find

ourselves pounding a base drum and rattling a tambourine with the Salvation Army.

Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century of our era. With that recognition much of the social stigma which had previously been attached to it disappeared. But it is not all gone yet. William James divides religious people into those with whom religion is a chronic state and those in whom it burns as an acute fever. If we run that fever, we are still liable to find ourselves in the minority and guilty of bad form. Though we need to realize that a truculent noncoöperator, a constitutional "Nay-sayer," may well overdo the matter of dissent from the majority. We greatly need a sound study of the psychology of nonconformity.

On the other hand, it is no great distinction to have been found always voting with the winning side. Thomas Hardy describes this type fairly in *The Return of the Native*:

A well-proportioned mind is one which shows no particular bias; one of which we may safely say that it will never cause its owner to be confined as a madman, tortured as a heretic, or crucified as a blasphemer. Also, on the other hand, that it will never cause him to be applauded as a prophet, revered as a priest, or exalted as a king. Its usual blessings are happiness and mediocrity; enabling its possessors to find their way to wealth, to wind up well, to die comfortably in their beds, and to get the decent monument which in many cases they deserve.

To have known nothing in this life but comfortable mediocrity is to have missed some of its joys as well as its ardors.

The profession and practice of our religion ought to lay all of us open at times to the charge of bad form since society is still imperfectly Christian, and at such times we are entitled to some share of Paul's shamelessness. This attitude

will have its secular counterpart. One can imagine John Graham Bell saying after getting the first telephone message, "I am not ashamed of the principle of telephony." One can imagine Lister saying, "I am not ashamed of the possibilities of antiseptic surgery." One can imagine the Wright brothers after the first flight at Kitty Hawk saying, "We are not ashamed of the principles of aeronautics." In being unashamed of his faith the religious man is not alone. He is in the goodly company of all discoverers and pioneers.

But it is only when you turn from the New Testament to the Old Testament that you get the elemental meaning of this idea. The feeling of being socially unclassed and in the minority is not met with until the world has become standardized and even sophisticated. In a more primitive society the feeling of shame is a matter of instinct rather than reflection.

The Hebrew language, in which the Old Testament was originally written, has very few abstract nouns. Its nouns are mainly derived from verb roots and retain, therefore, the suggestion of being or of action. This is one of the reasons why even in translation its style has such strength.

Strictly speaking, the Old Testament lacks the abstract idea of shame. Behind the feeling of being ashamed there are two different verbs. One means "to turn red, to blush"; the other means "to turn white, to grow pale, to be afraid." Let us take these two words in their most literal sense as being peculiarly appropriate to the problems of conduct and character in our world of today.

"Let me never turn red." The emotion of shame is associated in the first instance with the fact of nakedness. The story of the Garden of Eden is good psychology. "They knew that they were naked." Earnest attempts are always being made to cure us of what is said to be our needless prudery and to recover the lost innocence of man's first unashamed nakedness. These attempts never quite succeed.

The more earnest they are the more they fail. The essence of man's lost innocence would seem to have been his entire unself-consciousness. Modern man is much too self-conscious to recover the mood of that primitive innocence. On this matter Francis Thompson, in his essay on *Paganism Old and New*, has said the last word:

You cannot bring back the best age of Paganism, the age when Paganism was a faith. None will again behold Apollo in the forefront of the morning, or see Aphrodite in the upper air loose the long lustre of her golden locks. She who created Zeus and Here, Phoebus and Artemis, Pallas Athene and the fair-haired Aphrodite is dead, and lives only in her corruption.

Few of us, however, are seriously concerned with the attempt to recover life unashamed in the terms of the body. But all of us are concerned to keep life unashamed in thought and emotion. There is in these areas place for a proper reticence. On a certain day the prophet Isaiah came to Hezekiah and asked him how many of his secrets he had bared to his visitor, the King of Babylon. Hezekiah replied, "All that is in mine house they have seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Behold the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store, shall be carried to Babylon." Such, in the more intimate transactions of life, is the penalty for a want of reticence.

The life of Jesus has left in its wake a hundred unanswered questions. These all center about his understanding of himself and his mission. Through most of his ministry he guarded his "messianic secret," and when it was guessed by his closest friends, he immediately laid upon them an injunction to silence. When, finally, in his Passion he ac-

cepted the role and the designation, he still left his followers to interpret his secret for themselves. Jesus seems deliberately to have left very much unsaid, and his injunctions to silence have had to become for believers an argument from silence. One of the wisest and best men I have ever known said to me, at the end of a long life spent in the thought of God, "The older I grow, the more I am impressed by the reticence of God." We feel this divine reticence in the person of Jesus also.

There is abroad in the modern world in the realms of art and letters and autobiography much indecent nakedness of mind and heart, a perverse and perverted exhibitionism from which we may pray to be delivered. This cult of intellectual and emotional nakedness may well be prompted by doubt as to the worth of that which is thus exhibited. It is intensely self-conscious; but that very fact is a sign of a felt insecurity and want of self-confidence. Every mature art knows the power of understatement, and every mature religion will bid you guard

The hold that falls not, when the town is got,
The heart's heart, whose immured plot
Hath keys yourself keep not!
Yourself are with yourself the sole consortress
In that unleaguered fortress. . . .
Its keys are at the cincture hung of God.

I have a friend who says, "I think the Germans have had a case, and we must eventually try to meet that case. But all my patience and sympathy and charity vanish when I listen over the air to the Führer's hysterical, bullying, pathetic voice trying to state that case." There are moments in life when one recoils from such exhibitionism into "silence deep as that before the winds were made—Silence—eldest of things, language of old Night—primitive Dis-

courser—nothing plotting—nought caballing.” “It is impertinent,” Charles Lamb goes on to say, “to labor the point so near the heart of the Society of Friends.” For a Quaker Meeting is in these matters “unashamed.”

And then there is that other meaning of the original word, “Let me never turn pale, let me never be afraid.”

Modern liberalism has been, at certain points, in advance of the human fact. In particular, it has tried to assure men that there is nothing in the world to be afraid of and that we may now safely dispense with fear as an outworn motive for conduct. We thought we had at last made good the words of the Benedictus, that “being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we might serve him without fear.”

The Dean of St. Paul’s in London was in this country not long ago and he told us that, although we did not yet know much about such matters in America, we should never understand the mind of Europe, until we had envisaged whole populations haunted by fear, a naked dread of what yet might happen. Youth, he said, has insisted on putting back into the Litany the petition which its too liberal fathers had prematurely taken out, “From battle, murder, and sudden death, Good Lord deliver us.”

The animal instinct of fear is apparently a sound protective device by which nature warns us of danger at hand. Want of that instinct would seem to be a sign of imperfect equipment for life. Incredulous unwillingness to accept the signs of danger is folly, not wisdom; inability to recognize those signs is a mark of ignorance rather than of superior knowledge. The man who is constitutionally unable to turn white with sudden fear is abnormal. One has yet to meet the sane soldier who will not tell you that there were times in battle when he was terribly afraid, and he suspects the man who says otherwise of being either a liar or a fool.

Toward the end of his long life, during which he had

suffered much and thought intently, Josiah Royce found no little help in a magazine story he had read years earlier. It was a tale of a circle of timid persons gathered around one man who through much hardship had learned to be courageous.

Don't you see [he says to them] what ails your point of view? You want absolute security. And security—why, it's just the one thing a human being can't have, the thing that's the damnation of him if he gets it. To demand it just disintegrates a man. The main thing is to take the road fearlessly, to have courage to live one's life. Courage, that is the great word. Courage is security. There is no other kind. You have a right to trust the future. Myself, I believe there is some One to trust it to.

Courage is, even for the animal, the last desperate answer and recoil of the living thing to every occasion for fear. But with man, who can add to the mere creature will-to-live a reasonable and religious hope, courage is rooted in the confidence that we cannot drift beyond the love and care of the One of whom the storyteller speaks.

To put it on rational grounds, the Wisdom of Solomon speaks soberly when it says, "Fear is a betraying of the succours which reason offereth." After our first panic of fear in the presence of danger a strange quiet often ensues. We have made our mental peace with even the worst that may befall us, and thereafter we are inwardly masters and not victims of the circumstance. In this way we face and then accept grave illness, temporal reverses, the risks of war. The danger may still be there, and it is folly to deny it, but it no longer has us in thrall.

To put it on religious grounds, "perfect love casteth out fear." That is a saying far in advance of the love which most of us have yet mastered. It is a stern and not a

sentimental word. Yet countless men and women, and they are the world's saints, have set us their high example. They keep a proper and holy awe in the presence of God, but they are not "afraid" of him, as we commonly use that word. Nor are they afraid what man can do to them, even though he do his worst. It is easy to say these things and hard to live them. We should speak of such matters soberly, discreetly, "and in the fear of God." But to fail the saints at this point is to be unheroic.

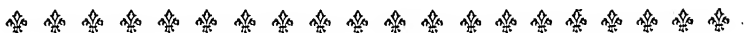
Nothing is more necessary today than that there should be among us many persons who in this sense of the word "are not ashamed." The margins of danger are far wider now than they have been for centuries past. Those who are "ashamed" in the presence of peril will go down under the strain and stress of private perplexity or under the burden of public responsibility. They will become merely one more added problem to themselves and their fellows. Surely we owe it to those whose life and lot are much harder than our own, to be courageously unashamed before whatever life may bring.

And finally, we shall do well to return in conclusion from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and to Paul's words, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." We have much cause for penitence at the imperfectness of our Christianity, whether personal or corporate. We have no occasion for pharisaic self-righteousness. But of the Christian religion as an interpretation of life and the world and as a rule of life we have no cause to be ashamed. "We crucified Christ on a stick," says Bernard Shaw, "but he seems to have got hold of the right end of that stick." What we have to be ashamed of is our stubborn grasp of its wrong end, not the truth of its right end.

In the face of the self-defeating nature of anti-Christian dogmas and utterly un-Christian practices, the Christian ideal seems today, not merely more desirable than ever

before but also more true in itself. The world must in the end be more like that than like a brutal concentration camp or a pogrom in the ghettos of some Polish city; else history is meaningless and man's life a madness. Let us never be ashamed of our religion.

XVI. *A Buoyant Faith*



*Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship
... they escaped all safe to land.*

—ACTS 27:44



IN OTHER and happier days some of you must have found yourselves wandering around the top deck of a liner at sea. As you picked your way past masts and funnels and skylights and ventilators, you noticed the lifeboats which take up so much of the space on an upper deck.

You may well have found yourself wondering how effective they would actually be if suddenly they had to be put into use. The first impression was not always reassuring. The planking of the boats had dried out in the sun, and their seams had opened up. They looked as though they might leak if they were launched. The ropes by which they were slung from the davits seemed frayed, and it might be an open question whether they would stand the weight if a boat loaded with forty or fifty persons were being lowered into the water. However, the day was fair and you never supposed that these doubts would be tested in fact. It was in the ship herself that you trusted, for it was the business of the company to land you safe and sound alongside dock at the end of the voyage.

As a matter of fact, that kind of world, so far as its suggestion of foolproof safety was concerned, came to an

end on the night of April 14, 1912, off the coast of Newfoundland when the *Titanic* went down. She was on her maiden voyage from Liverpool. She was the latest thing in ships, unsinkable because of countless watertight compartments. She was out for a record, and, against wireless warnings from other ships in the neighborhood, ran at full speed through a floe of drift ice. A low-lying berg struck her a glancing blow that like a can opener cut her wide open the whole length of one side. She went down with a loss of 1,517 lives. Looking back, one always feels that the sinking of the *Titanic* was an ominous cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, coming over the horizon of the years. That tragedy was in its way the first time that our proud, headlong, self-confident civilization had been given pause. It was as though the ship, her owners, and her crew were sinning the sin of insolence of which the ancients were so afraid and were being rebuked by nature. Not long after, we were plunged into the first World War. We have never been so self-confident again.

In the world in which we are now living we have given up all dreams of the unsinkable ship. We have seen too many good ships go down to cherish any such illusion. Therefore, whatever else may be neglected on shipboard, the modern world gives special care to the boats and the rafts and the kegs of water and the tins of food and the life preservers. Whatever else may be wrong, there must be no doubt about these; they must be right. The stirring and heroic tales of our day are those of little boats and men saved by them after enduring incredible suffering.

We have here a parable of life, a parable of the difference between the nature of great societies on the one hand and the character of single individuals on the other. The two, it is true, strive to do the same thing, to get men ahead on the voyage of life and across the sea of the years, safe to their desired haven. But the dimensions, and the

operations are different. In the one instance your safety is assured you by an organized society, and in the other you are thrown upon your own resources and must save yourself.

As a matter of historic fact, the conception of the institution as a ship is the oldest and most familiar of the metaphors which we have for the Christian Church. The idea survives in one of the words constantly used in church architecture, the word "nave," which comes straight from the Latin word for ship.

This idea of the Church as a ship was taken in turn from the story of Noah's ark. You may see it carved in the stonework of countless medieval cathedrals. You will find it elaborated in the writings of the early Christian fathers. Perhaps the most famous of these descriptions is that of Hippolytus, written early in the third century.

The sea [he says] is the world in which the Church is set, like a ship tossed in the deep. She carries the cross of Christ like a mast. Her prow is the east, her stern is the west, her rudders are the two testaments, the ropes which run around her are the love of Christ. The boat which she bears with her is the font of baptism. She has anchors of iron, the holy commandments of Christ.

Another writing of a slightly later period describes the human cargo of the Church.

When thou callest an assembly of the church, as one that is commander of a great ship, charge the deacons as mariners to prepare places for the brethren as passengers. In the middle let the bishop's throne be set and on each side let the elders sit down, and let the deacons stand near at hand, for they are the mariners and managers of the ship.

It was with this historic symbolism of the ark in the flood, the ship on the ocean of life, that Augustine wrote words which have given one of our most lovely prayers:

Blessed are all thy saints, O Lord, who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of our mortality and have at last come into the port of quiet and felicity. Cast a gracious eye upon us who are still in our dangerous voyage; strengthen us when we are exposed to the rough storms of trouble and temptation and grant, O Lord, that in thy good time we may bring our vessel safe to our desired haven, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Of all the historic metaphors which over nearly two thousand years have been used to describe the Christian Church this is the most picturesque and in many ways the most true. In joining a church you get help which comes from the gathered experience of many fellow Christians, and you have the feeling that to some extent your affairs are put in the care of a group of persons who are supposed to be competent in these matters. In our kind of church we do not profess that ministers have access to any secret infallibility, but at least they are supposed to have had some experience of human life and to be familiar with its moral problems and its spiritual possibilities.

There is in the Wisdom of Solomon a verse which says, "Yea, though a man went to sea without art." That is the way many a person feels about the great and wide sea of life—he has to launch out without much art, without experience as a sailor. Once a man has realized his lack of art and skill in living the religious life, he understands why he is wise to take passage in an institution which represents long and wide experience, which knows something of the way of a ship in the sea. "Institutions," says a modern writer, "are permanent clusters of ideals, customs, laws,—and must inform a groping individual what, according to racial experience or national experience, he wants, and hold him to that meaning." This is true of the church, but it is not peculiar to the church. It is equally true of the state

or the university. Institutions are addressed to different needs and have each their own special task, but the nature of institutions is the same everywhere. The man who stays away from church because it represents institutional religion, but who accepts the state and goes to college without questioning their institutionalism, is illogical. The church is not free from the defects of the institution; yet it is not denied the values of the institution merely because it is religious, not secular.

But the defects are there, and in politics or education or religion we are at times all keenly aware of them. The main difficulty is that no church or state or college fits any one of us precisely or corresponds exactly to us. Therefore, when we get into a great institution, we often feel as David felt when he was dressed up in Saul's armor. It was too big for him. He rattled around in it. He did not know how to manage it. So he got out of it, saying, "I cannot go with these: for I have not proved them."

That is precisely the way many a person feels when he goes to church or enters college. He finds himself committed to a great deal that he does not understand, pledged to many propositions that mean nothing to him, and required to do things that have no relation whatsoever to his own immediate interests. In our colleges and universities we are familiar with the freshman or the first-year graduate student who decides by midyears that he is in the wrong place. Therefore, he proposes to leave. He may be right; perhaps he is misplaced and ought to go. But the chances are that he is wrong and had best be persuaded to stay out the year to give it a full, fair trial. What he regards as his criticism of a university is probably a tacit criticism of himself, an unconscious comment upon his own ignorance and inexperience. Thus it is that one of my friends says, "We begin life thinking that the world is not good enough for us, but we

go on with life wondering whether we are going to be good enough for the world."

The truth is that no one of us will ever find, or ought to find, a college or a church that fits him exactly, which is tailored to his measure; for if it fitted him it would be much too small for those "all sorts and conditions of men" whom it must also encompass. We ought, indeed, to be afraid of a church or a college that fits us when we join it, for in time we should certainly outgrow it.

We accept the fact, then, that in any one of the great societies to which we belong there will be much to which we find in our own lives no immediate correspondence. It may be that later years and different experiences will bring to life these lifeless areas of such societies. Meanwhile, we must let them stand. Indeed, we must go further than that and sometimes accept much with which we may even disagree. A great church historian has said that the survival of the Christian religion is due in no small part to its ability to tolerate contradictions within the system of its own thought. And let us remember that story of Thomas Huxley, dining at the house of a very emancipated hostess. She said to him, "Mr. Huxley, last Sunday in church they recited a creed in which I do not believe, and, in order to express my disapproval, I got up and left the church. Don't you think I did right?"

"Certainly not, madam," he replied, "any more than I should be right to rise and leave your dinner table because I do not happen to like this entrée you have just served me."

Yet when all this has been said, it remains true that there come times in life, times of crisis and need, when our great ships run into trouble. They may actually suffer temporary shipwreck in history, as is the case today with the churches of Norway and the universities in Holland. And even with us, where state and church and college are still intact, we realize that we need the added protection of

private religious conviction. No one can ever feel safe without such assurance. A democracy is no better than the character of its citizens, or a church than the personal religion of its members. In this sense of the word William James was right when he insisted in a famous passage that "personal religion is the primordial thing."

When we come to personal religion, that is in every case something much less comprehensive and something far more intimate than the creed of a church or its system of theology. Countless persons still believe that the Bible is from cover to cover the word of God, uniformly inspired, and therefore in theory uniformly important. But turn the pages of any well-read Bible, and some of its pages will be white and whole, while others will be dog-eared with reading and rereading. Each of us has his Bible within the Bible and no two of those personal Bibles ever coincide. Therefore, even if we have to give up the doctrine of the verbal infallibility of all scripture, we do not lose our Bibles in consequence: the ninetieth Psalm, and the fourteenth chapter of John and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians will still be everlastingly true for us. For every man of us his private Bible is unsinkable.

Many of us, I think, would shrink a little from making public the sum of those memories and experiences and persuasions which make up our most personal religion. We should shrink from this publicity partly from a determination not to exhibit what is very dear to us, but in equal part from what might seem to be the presumption of implying that such seemingly trivial experiences and scattered thoughts deserve to be called a creed or a theology. Some humble person we have known, some bit of verse we have loved though the critics say it is bad poetry, the memory of some place and hour that would have meant little to anyone else, a stray remark that has lived on in the mind

as a veritable anchor in times of storm: all these have been to us intimations of God, clues to religion; but no one has ever supposed, least of all ourselves, that they deserve to be organized into a church or compiled as a system of theology. Yet in need it is to these stray intimate treasures that we turn, and by them we live. To be false to them would seem even worse than giving up a church or denying a creed. For if we ceased to trust them, we could never belong to any church or believe any creed. And it is by such convictions that a historic religion in time of trouble is kept afloat and alive.

This, then, is a time in our lives when we can well afford, one by one, to review and reaffirm what we know to be the intimate stuff of our personal religion. There is, for example, much mystery left in human life. Too easy explanations of it will not help others who are in trouble, and will not save us when in turn we come into trouble. Albert Schweitzer says that during the last war many men lost their religion because their theology could not explain the mass of evil facts. He says however, that, in a Sunday-school class for boys which he had taught in Strasbourg, he had always told his lads that they must not expect religion to explain everything, since religion has never professed to do that. But he did tell them that they might expect their religion to give them strength to stand what they could not understand, yet had to bear. As a result, none of his boys came back to Strasbourg to say that he had lost his religion. They still had their private convictions, less imposing perhaps, but more buoyant than great systems of theology which so often fail because they profess too much. What was so then can be so now.

The times ask you, then, not merely to what great societies—state and church and college—you belong. They also ask you soberly to review your own experience and reaffirm

your confidence in those fragments of the whole which you personally have found will bear you up. For thus "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship . . . they escaped all safe to land."

XVII. *Repenting of Our Ignorance*



The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

—ACTS 17:30



THIS is a striking and puzzling verse. The thought of God winking at us, as the word is commonly used, seems both improbable and irreverent. "To wink," says the *Oxford Dictionary*, is "to convey intimate information, or to express good-humored interest." The suggestion that God has special favorites to whom he conveys intimate information is not one which appeals to us today. God has, it is true, his prophets, his saints, his friends, who have made themselves such by the manner of their living, but they would be the last to assume that God is a respecter of persons.

As for expressions of good-humored interest, that is a weak phrase for what Whittier calls "The Eternal Goodness" and what Masfield calls "The Everlasting Mercy." Good-humored interest in others is a passing mood which at best is always just a little patronizing. God's tempers of mind and heart must be nobler than that. In short, the common meaning of the word gets the idea of God winking at us into difficulties. This particular bit of Paul's sermon on Mars Hill seems to have lapsed carelessly into a

fault to which preachers are very liable, the use of a poor metaphor.

On the other hand, the Book of Acts is not the only work of its kind and of its time which uses this figure of speech. One of the most famous books of the Apocrypha is the Wisdom of Solomon, which was written perhaps fifty years before Acts, and in that book we find exactly the same word. The writer, speaking to God, says, "Thou hast mercy upon all, and winkest at the sins of men, because they should amend." It is possible, if not indeed probable, that Paul was quoting from the Wisdom of Solomon. But whether that be so or not, the striking coincidence in the use of an unusual word suggests that the idea was in the air. In a time of change it was the sort of thing men were thinking and feeling.

The word originally used in Wisdom and Acts has a connotation which has dropped out of modern English usage. It means "to overlook." The thought of the text is that God chooses at times not to see what we are and what we have done, or at least to grant us the comfort of assuming that he has not seen. There is in him some strain of mercy which mitigates what otherwise might have to be his too stern justice. The idea is precisely that implied in the common remark which so often passes between us, "Well, all right; I'll overlook it."

A famous teacher here once said that it is occasionally a good plan to give your moral absolute a holiday. That is taking a risk, but the risk is warranted by the fact that those who mediate moral ideals to us sometimes seem to give us a holiday. Their action suggests that there may be some happenings in life for which God mercifully will not hold us to too strict account.

On the other hand, Paul does not seem entirely sure that we can rely on God's overlooking things indefinitely. He is, indeed, a little uneasy at the thought that God may

eventually decide not to wink but, instead, to look steadily at us. According to the sermon on Mars Hill, what God has winked at for a long time is wrong ideas about himself. He has winked at idolatry and all that is implied in that word. He has winked, therefore, at bad theology and bad science and bad morals. All these bad things are catalogued as belonging to times of ignorance, and Paul soberly suspects that such times are coming to an end.

Here again we find the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon backing Paul up. Speaking about wrong ideas of God which men have had in the past, he says, "They erred in the knowledge of God . . . they lived in the great war of ignorance, and those so great plagues they called peace." I do not know how many times in recent years my mind has gone back to that verse as being about as accurate an account of our present situation as one can well find. We have really had no peace for years. The wisest men have always known this. We think of the Victorian Age and indeed the whole nineteenth century as being in the main the good old days, the piping times of a peaceful era. Francis Thompson wrote three or four noble odes on the Victorian Era and its century, but he was not deceived as to his world. Thus he says to the passing nineteenth century:

Yet let it grieve, Gray Dame,
Thy passing spirit, God wot,
Thou wast halfhearted, wishing peace but not
The means of it.

Hear'st thou not
The world's knives bickering in their sheaths?

The plagues which the world has miscalled peace are, in the words of Wisdom "a great war of ignorance," that is, a world incessantly at war because of its ignorance—ignorance of self, ignorance of others, ignorance of right and wrong, ignorance of God. Such seems to have been the

thought which vaguely, yet none the less powerfully, was then working in men's minds. The time is coming when God will not continue to wink indefinitely at an age of ignorance.

And now this whole idea comes to life once more. There are today two major stubborn forms of ignorance at which we cannot safely assume that God will wink much longer.

The first is ignorance of evil, and under evil we must include all those natural ills from which man has suffered from time immemorial. We have found cures for many of them, and hope to find cures for most of them, for all perhaps but the last incurable one. It is hard to understand how the Eternal Goodness has allowed untold millions to die of these many ills for which now we have our proven remedies. Their penalty for being born too soon was very heavy. Some of us, for example, can still remember the attitude of the community even up to the end of the last century toward those who died of consumption in their twenties. They were, in the minds of people round about, marked down, set apart, almost dedicated. We and they bowed to the fatality. That is all gone now. One senses in the theory and practice of medicine today a suggestion of something very like a religious mission of grave moral obligation. Every good research man in medicine has the meaning of the text in his mind. God may have winked at medical ignorance in the past, but he is not going to do so any longer; such ignorance is today felt to be almost culpable.

The graver form of evil is, of course, evil in its moral aspects. The old theological name for this evil is "sin." It has been the custom of our kind of person to take evil in this form rather casually. Those of us who live sheltered lives see little of vice in its cruder forms, and when it occurs, it is cared for by the police and the magistrates. Many of those who still use the old word "sin," use it

merely as a kind of "x" or "y" in an intellectual equation which they are prepared to solve easily. The word "sin" has little exact correspondence to our actual experience of life itself. The general tendency has been to regard moral evil as a matter of immaturity or a bit of bad inheritance which is sure to be outgrown by the individual and the race. So Browning in a familiar line says, "The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound."

Those of you who heard Miss Comstock's valedictory address a month ago will remember what was in some ways its most striking statement. She said that looking back over the years of her presidency of Radcliffe she felt that perhaps the one major mistake in her whole point of view had been this—she had underestimated the positiveness of evil. She got instant mental response from many of her hearers. She had put her finger unerringly on what plainly has been a real fault in the modern mind. Thus there is in England a popular free-lance philosopher named Joad, who has owed his popularity to his success in clothing the ideas of the average man in some semblance of intellectual decency. Joad has been known as a theological naughty boy, a clever critic of conventional religion. If we are to take him at his word in his latest book, called *God and Evil*, he has now been converted. He says quite truly that in times like these interest in religion is awakened by the general distresses. But he then goes on to say that the main present source of this interest is to be found in "the obtrusiveness of evil." He is willing to admit that there may be no more evil than there ever has been in the world, but he insists that it is more obtrusive today than for a long time past. In so far as the evils of cruelty, savagery, oppression, violence, aggrandisement and lust for power become obtrusive, they become correspondingly more difficult to explain away by the various methods that have been the fashion of the past. He is absolutely right, and the result of his rightness is a

widespread, sober conviction that although God may have winked at such evils in the past, he will do so no longer. This is to be true not merely of the evils which are so aggressively patent in our enemies but also of the less obtrusive, yet no less serious, evils of our own life. There is, in short, far less self-righteousness among us today than there was in the first World War, and there is a general agreement that through the plain, hard teaching of history God is calling on us to mend many of our ways. This is not a matter of sentimental luxury; it is a realistic conclusion to which the course of events has now brought us.

The second form of ignorance which God plainly cannot tolerate indefinitely is willful ignorance of himself. The most widely read book of the hour bears the title, *One World*. Whatever else the book may succeed in doing, it does succeed in persuading us of our need of its idea. There is somewhere in even the most internationally minded of us a residual isolationist. We inherited him from our animal forbears. History thus far has encouraged our inclination to preserve that heritage. Tolstoi wrote some lovely lines which Tschaikowsky set to music in the "Pilgrim Song." "My blessing fall on this fair world, on mountain, valley, ocean; on friend and stranger and foe." Few of us are willing to sing that song without some mental reservation. To be fair-minded to a race you do not like, to a state whose policies you suspect, to a people whose ways seem to you primitive or perverse, to societies that do not accept your axioms—all this is a rare rather than a common virtue. Be not deceived in this matter; if you hunt long enough and dig deep enough into yourself you will find somewhere within that old stubborn isolationist who has lived so long and dies so hard in us all, some fragmentary self that still shirks *One World*.

But if there is now and is to be hereafter only *One World*, then there must be for the religion of that world

One God only. I have said to some of you before that if at any point Emerson is right in saying that each man must live all history in his own person, this will be the point at which the religious man relives the past, with its long struggle to replace the many and the partisan gods by one God. Every one of us has to relive that history in his own experience and often at the cost of much discipline in humility and in charity. To be mentally just and generous to the other man, with whom at the level of common life you cannot agree and with whom you may often find yourself at war, is a rare virtue, mastered, alas, by only a fraction of those who profess and call themselves Christians. The only safe way in which the religious man may think of such persons is to postpone his thought of them until he first has thought of God, the Father of all. Behind most of man's inhumanities to man, which have often sought and received the sanction of religion, there lie wrong thoughts about God, actual, downright ignorance of God. The one best prospective means of ending this tedious inhumanity of history is to be found in a better knowledge of God.

God has been very patient. But a time seems to be coming when he will not allow willful religious ignorance to go on longer, for much of our ignorance has been willful; that is what has made it wrong. If we are ever to hope to end wars, we must end first this great war of ignorance, these plagues which we have called peace. Even though it may have been true of the past that "the times of this ignorance God winked at, he now commandeth all men everywhere to repent of their ignorance." Therefore, behind all your thinking about the conduct of this war and the plain perplexities of the post-war years you will do well to set that great sentence from Augustine, "Blessed is he who loves Thee, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee; for he alone loses no one dear to him to whom all are dear in Him who never can be lost."

XVIII. *The Fathers and the Sons*¹



He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to the fathers.

—MAL. 4:6



IN OUR English Bible these are the last words of the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament. When you turn the next page, you have gone on and over into another kind of world, that of the New Testament. Two religions are at stake here, Judaism and Christianity.

In the face of a common enemy those who today profess these two religions are agreed that our common Jewish-Christian tradition must be treated as a single cultural fact and that our religions will stand or fall together.

Meanwhile, neither the one nor the other can deny certain contrasts between the Old and the New Testaments. Christianity neglected from the first certain ideas which were and still are necessary for orthodox Judaism and then went on to say some other things which Judaism had left unsaid or had preferred not to say.

With this fact in mind we turn to the text for the morning. "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to the fathers." These words state in simple and pictorial terms the felt tension between

¹ A Baccalaureate Sermon, preached to the Senior Class in Harvard College on Commencement Day, May 27, 1943.

an old order and a new order. They put their finger on the spot where the strain comes and express the hope that the chain will not break at that point, but rather that the hearts of fathers and sons may be large enough and generous enough to stand the strain of a time of change.

There is now little doubt left that the only word which adequately describes what is going on in the world is the word "revolution." It has been said that the worst fault of English style is the use of intense words to describe ideas and emotions which are not intense. This is one of the patent faults of our own American culture, which habitually lives by overstatement. The word "revolution" is an intense word, which should be used discreetly, advisedly, soberly. But when we have used sober discretion, it remains the only word that matches the fact. I met Professor Whitehead the other day, taking his constitutional, and fell in with him. I asked him how long it had been since we had seen changes in the fabric of human life as radical as those which are now in process. He said, "If you mean the history of Europe, the answer is 'The Thirty Years' War.' If you mean the history of mankind as a whole, the answer is 'Never.'"

There are few of us who have not at some time or other played with the idea of revolution, and all of us are now concerned to understand the nature of revolution and to try to draw up some rule for life, particularly our mental life, in a time of revolution. There is a story of an African explorer engaged in a long, rapid, forced march. One morning his native porters were found squatted on their haunches and refusing to move. Threats and bribes failed to stir them. They told him through an interpreter that their bodies had got too far ahead of their minds, and they now had to wait until their minds caught up with their bodies. Our bodies, our fortunes, and our once normal expectation of life are all involved in the fast-moving event. But we shall never

do the job well unless our minds keep up with our bodies.

We have seen and known over all these last years a vast deal of impatient criticism of our major institutions. Much of this criticism, running true to revolutionary form, has seen little hope of better things until what are said to be the worn out patterns of present-day life are discarded. We call America the melting-pot. A shrewd visitor has said that we are not a melting-pot; we are only a varnishing-pot from which a thin veneer of Puritanism has been skimmed over the whole. Hence the widespread revolt against the too negative and repressive aspects of our stern old Puritan heritage. As for our beliefs the classical creeds of the historic religions are felt to be more and more incompatible with the findings of the sciences of nature and of man. They seem to be so antiquated as to defy restatement in modern terms. Our churches, at least our Protestant churches, are described and dismissed as the innocuous clubs of dull middle-class proprieties, out of touch with the best brains of the world on the one hand and the best manual skills on the other hand. Our private colleges and universities are under constant fire from critics who accuse them of being playgrounds for sons of the well-to-do or ivory towers and luxury trades for pedants. The home is charged with being a prison system where freedom must be forfeited to the dull daily round. All this, and much more to the same effect, has been common coin in general circulation.

Now we are confronted with the question whether we are willing to follow the logic of these leads to its conclusion. My own impression is that all this healthy and wholesome criticism of our life has hitherto been the sign of our awareness of safe margins. We can allow ourselves and indeed should expect of ourselves just such criticism of our affairs when we feel secure. But confronted now for the first time in our history with the menace of insecurity, we know that all this has been but a half-truth. And the ques-

tion is, do we want to see the interlocked ongoing chain of our tradition as a whole broken? Do we want to be the link where the chain will break?

I suppose it was with that prospect in sight—a prospect which happily is less likely today than it was even a little while ago—and with that question in mind that you of the graduating class have come in here this morning. For it is not we who arranged this baccalaureate service for your Commencement Day; it was you who asked that it might be held. It looks as though in leaving College you wished to dot your *i*'s and cross your *t*'s. It was not the Bible lesson or the prayers or the hymns—much less the sermon—that you had in mind. It was the act itself, an act which is not an emergency measure but an act which has always been part of the history and tradition of the College. There is much mental poise and perspective to be gained in troubled times from doing the familiar thing in the habitual way.

In a few minutes we shall be singing the old metrical version of the seventy-eighth Psalm. This hymn has been used for many, many years at our baccalaureate service. We now have over three hundred years of unbroken, ongoing history here at Harvard. That fact itself gives stability and confidence to our life together. We are not the first generation in this society to live through troubled times, to hear rumors of wars, and then to face the fact of war. No man ought to live in the past, particularly in times like these; but no man can be wholly indifferent to a past like ours. For such a past gives poise in the present and hope for the future. In a farewell sermon preached to our sister University in "the other Cambridge" Dean Inge said, "Believe me, the only promise of a better future for our country is to be looked for from those to whom her past is dear." This is the confidence written into the stanzas of our baccalaureate hymn:

Let children learn the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,
Which in our youngest years we saw,
And which our fathers told.

Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs,
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.

It must have been with this thought in mind that you asked for this service and now have come to it—a desire and determination, whatever may befall, to keep faith with the many generations that make up the history of Harvard.

And then, since you were coming to church, you must have wondered whether religion has anything to say to you. Well, a very learned man at the end of a long life spent on these matters said quite simply, "Wherever a man is so carried beyond himself, whether for any other being or for a cause or for a nation, that his personal fate seems to him as nothing in comparison with the happiness or triumph of the other, there you have the universal basis and structure of religion." On this basis the only irreligious man is the man who cares more for himself than for anyone or anything else.

But since there are grades of religion as of all other things in life, a mature religion as against primitive and fanatical religions is one in which the word "God" is not a magical formula intended to serve some narrow private welfare, forgetful of the weal of humanity as a whole. Cardinal Newman once said that nothing is easier than to say "God" and mean nothing by it. That is, alas, a habit into which chronic religion slips and from which we should pray to be delivered. All that is meant by education in these matters might be described as a discipline in the ability to say

"God" with something like the true and full meaning of that word. There is not one of us whose religion, no matter what care he has given to it, does not need more education at this point. We should always be consciously trying to widen the circle compassed by the word "God." So far as religion goes, the issues of this war will depend upon the meaning and the application of the meaning of the word "God" which the victors will have in mind when they tackle the problems of the peace. If, while the fighting lasts, we have no moral conviction such as the writer just quoted describes with which to match the fanaticism of the enemy, we are at a military disadvantage. But if we can, as we believe we can, meet him and match him and conquer him, the question will then be whether we have meanings for the word "God" equal to what will be a very great opportunity.

You may say, as men have always said, that God is hard to find. Like Job we look on the right hand and on the left and we cannot behold him. He is conspicuous by his absence rather than his presence. Sometimes we wonder whether he is there at all, indeed, whether there be any God. But we are not the first persons in the world who have felt the sting of the question, "Where now is thy God?" He is often hidden in the clouds and thick darkness of history. Pascal makes the doctrine of the "hidden God" a necessary article of any religious faith and dares to say that a religion which does not preach the doctrine of the hidden God is a false religion. One can only hazard the guess that the meaning of our experience of the hidden God is this: We have therein an intimation of our human freedom. For in history the clouds and thick darkness by which God is hidden have most often been caused by human passion and stupidity. God hides himself from us when we try to hide from him. At this point the temper of the times today is very different from that of the last war. Men asked then, "Where is

God? Why has God let this happen? Why does not God do something?" Those questions are curiously wanting today, and they are wanting, not because men have lost faith in God, but because their thought of God has come a little nearer to the truth of God. We know only too well that it is what we of this age have done and have left undone which has brought us again into war. Therefore, our awareness of a hidden God is at once the measure of our past failures and of our future opportunities.

You men of this graduating class are going out into a world which no one, consulting merely his desire for animal ease, could wish. You are going out into a world for which you are not responsible and against which many of you protested in the past. But it is a world with which now you have made your mental peace, and you have its measure. Your task is harder than that ever faced by any class leaving Harvard College. Neither the days of the American Revolution nor of the Civil War nor of the first World War were as dangerous and as difficult. I read over not long ago the baccalaureate sermons preached at Harvard during the Civil War. That war was hardly mentioned, and then only as something quite apart from the life of the College, which apparently went on in its normal and quiet way. Such isolation, such exemption, is no longer possible to men in history. Whatever else your criticism of things may be, you can never say that you have not lived in a decisive age or that the world has offered you only trivial tasks which will leave no mark in history.

One of the two or three thoughts that will sustain you from now on is the sober conclusion that you do not want the chain of life in a place like this to break at the spot where you now are because you have worn morally thin or are found to have some moral flaw. The event into which you are going will be strange, confused, often seeming little less than the doings in a madhouse. What enables men to

carry on at a time like that is precisely the feeling that they are not swept up into a milling crowd but are, in Royce's phrase, members of a beloved community of memory and hope. Crowds disperse, but communities go on.

And if you wish to add to this simple idea something more definitely religious you will say, as both Jew and Christian have always said, that the idea of God, sometimes obscured in the immediate scene, is then best envisaged in the distances. That, really, is the way the Bible thinks of God. "In the beginning God . . ." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." These latter words from the Gospel mean that from the first there has been in all things what the poet calls "an eternity of thought." The end of the story is the vision of the New Jerusalem which Augustine called "The City of God." Every revolutionary and every utopian since, even the most materialistic and secular, have used Augustine's "City of God" as the best working pattern for their projects. Between those two extremes of the Word that was in the beginning and the City that shall be in the end there lie much perplexity and pain, but the beginning and the ending are to the man of faith clear.

Something of all this sort is implied in those old words written in a time of tension and transition about the hearts of the fathers and the sons, keeping their common ongoing faith. This thought ought not to fail you in your far journeys, your perils, your grim jobs. Whatever may befall you, do not lose faith in the City of God. Francis Thompson once described our human sight of that City, as seen in a stormy time:

I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;

Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half glimpsed turrets slowly wash again,
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen . . .
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.